

my Golden Library of

Animal Stories

FROM AUSTRALIA AND
NEW ZEALAND

Volume 3



GOLDEN PRESS
Sydney • Auckland

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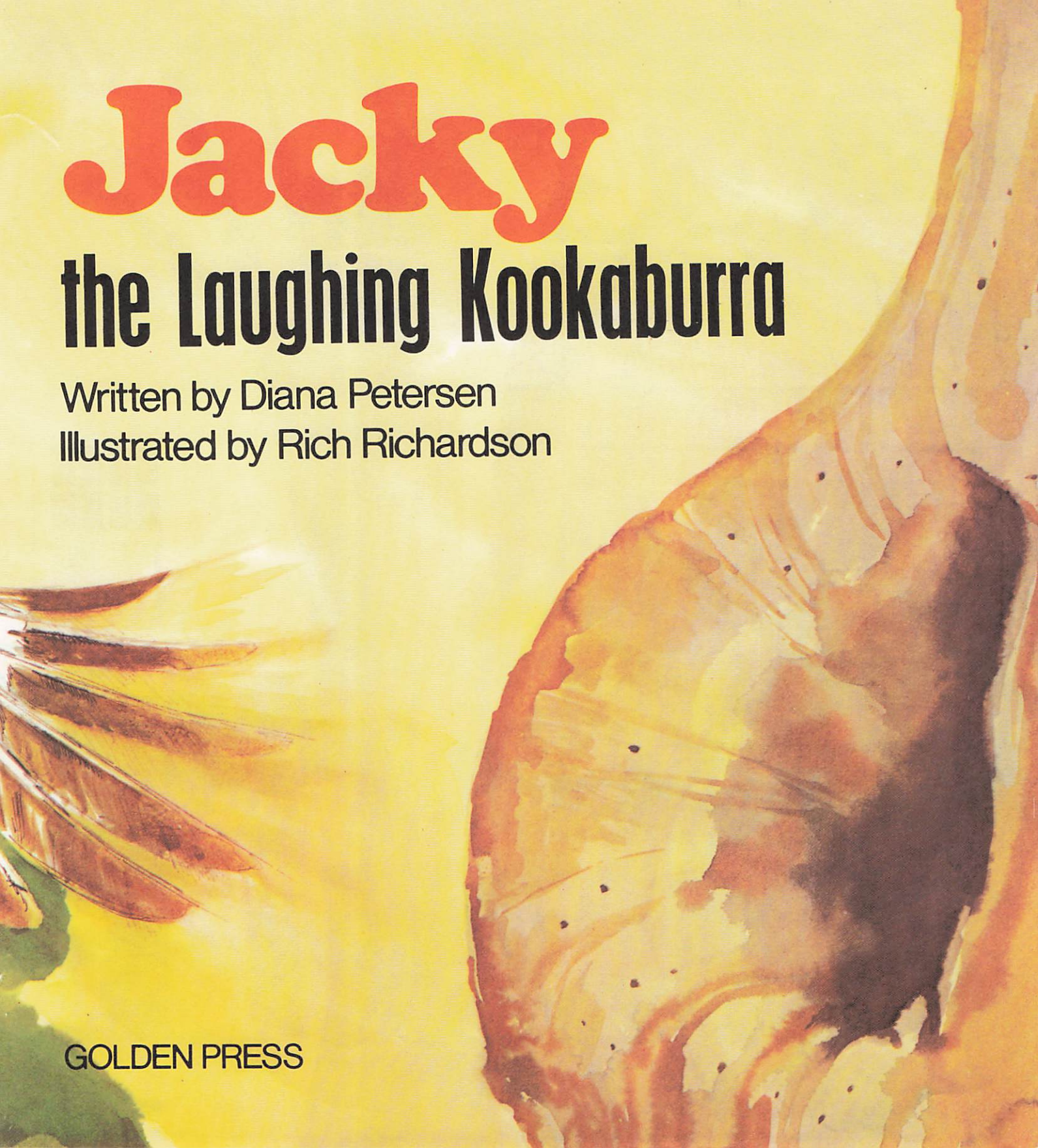


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A watercolor illustration of a kookaburra, showing its head and back in shades of brown, orange, and yellow. The bird is positioned on the right side of the cover, facing left. The background is a soft, yellowish-orange wash.

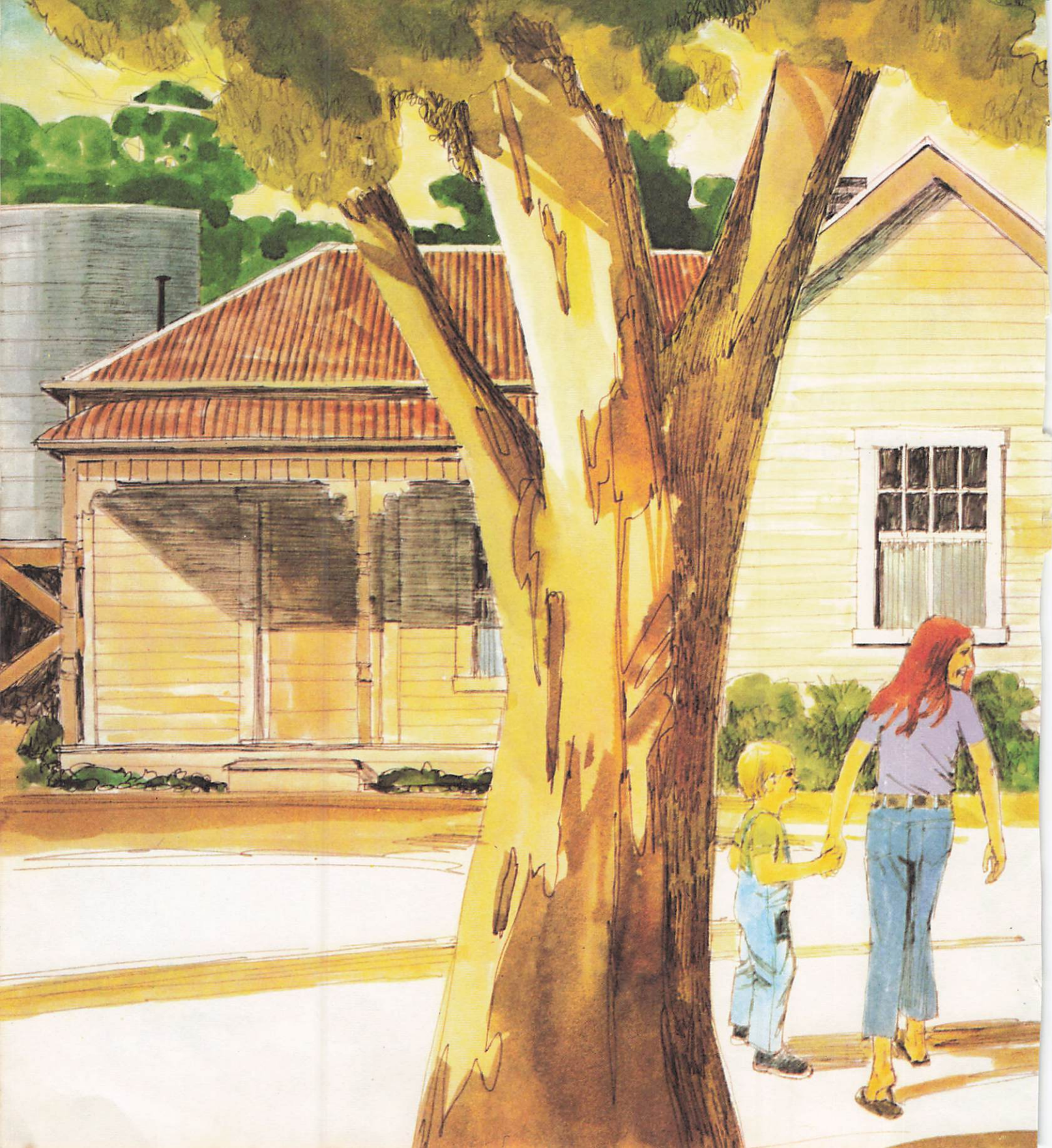
Jacky

the Laughing Kookaburra

Written by Diana Petersen

Illustrated by Rich Richardson

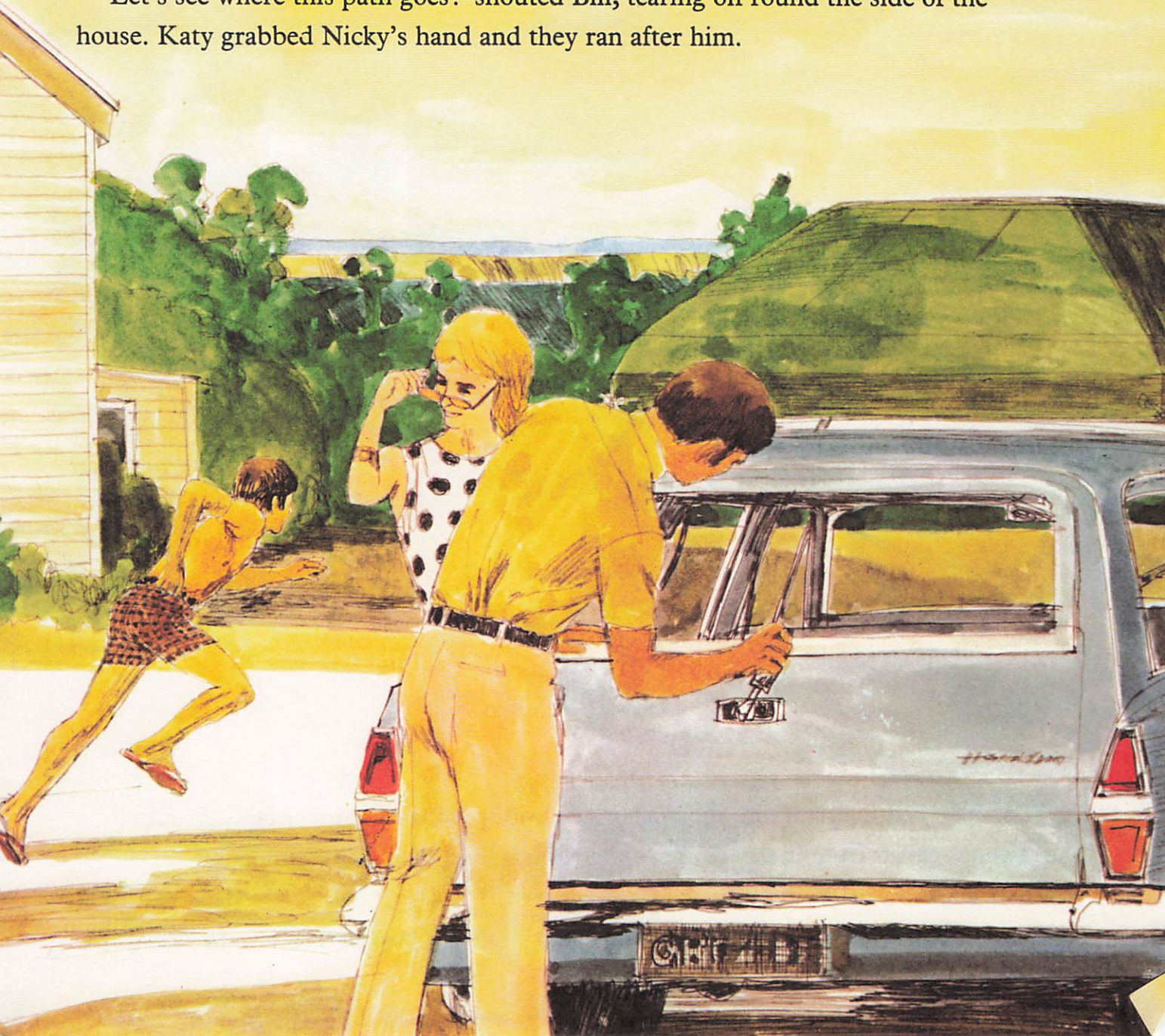
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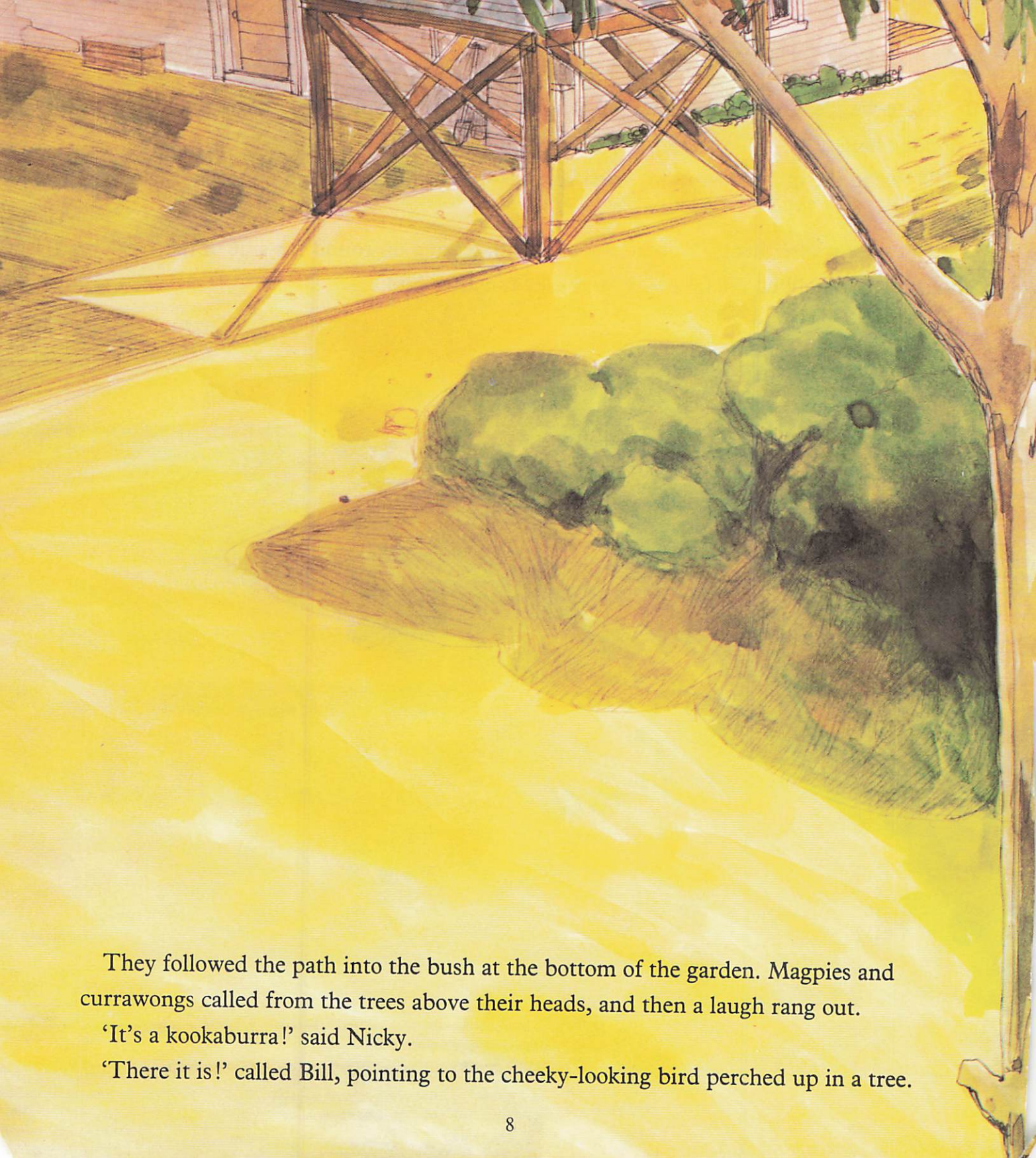


'Here we are, Gum Tree Cottage,' said Dad as the car pulled up outside the little holiday house.

'We're in the mountains now', cried Katy as the children tumbled out to look around.

'Let's see where this path goes!' shouted Bill, tearing off round the side of the house. Katy grabbed Nicky's hand and they ran after him.

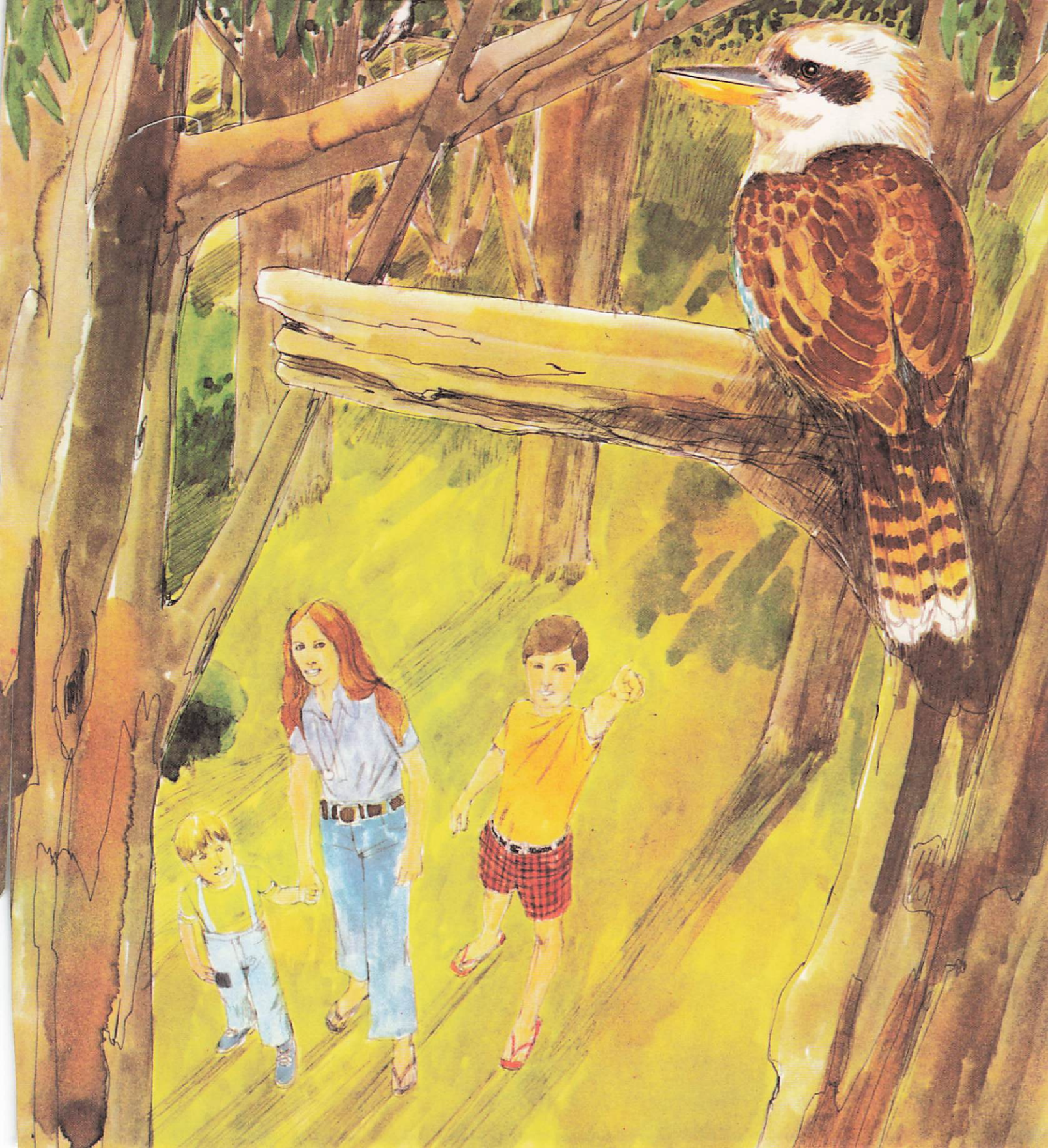




They followed the path into the bush at the bottom of the garden. Magpies and currawongs called from the trees above their heads, and then a laugh rang out.

‘It’s a kookaburra!’ said Nicky.

‘There it is!’ called Bill, pointing to the cheeky-looking bird perched up in a tree.





'Mum! Dad! There's a kookaburra out there! We saw him!' called Bill as they raced inside.

'I know,' smiled Mum. 'There's no mistaking that laugh. Here's some meat. Perhaps he'll come down for it.'

Bill threw a piece towards the tree where the kookaburra sat, but for a long time he stayed there motionless, looking first at the children, and then at the meat. Then suddenly he swooped, snatched it up, and flew back to the top of the tree.







‘Do kookaburras have names?’ asked Nicky. ‘Of course not, silly,’ replied Bill.

‘Yes they can. Let’s call him Jacky.’ said Katy. ‘Come here Jacky, here’s some more meat.’

This time the kookaburra didn’t wait before darting down to snatch the meat. He came right up to the step to grab the piece Nicky had dropped on the step.



Mum called the children in for their tea and they talked excitedly about Jacky.

‘What else does Jacky eat?’ asked Bill.

‘Oh, snakes, lizards, mice,’ said Dad, laughing as Katy wrinkled up her nose in disgust.

Outside, Jacky and the other kookaburras had gathered in the great gum tree for their evening song.

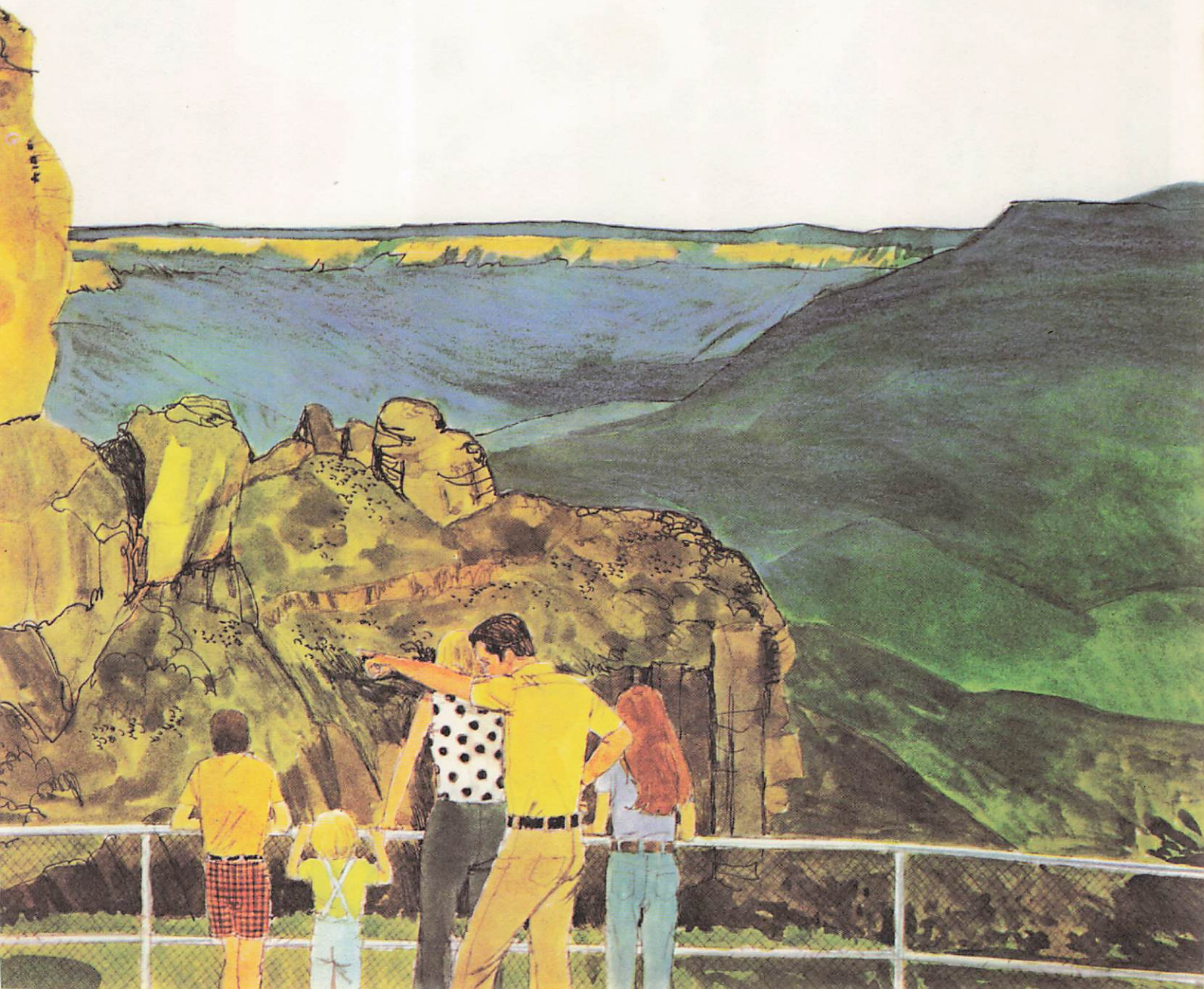


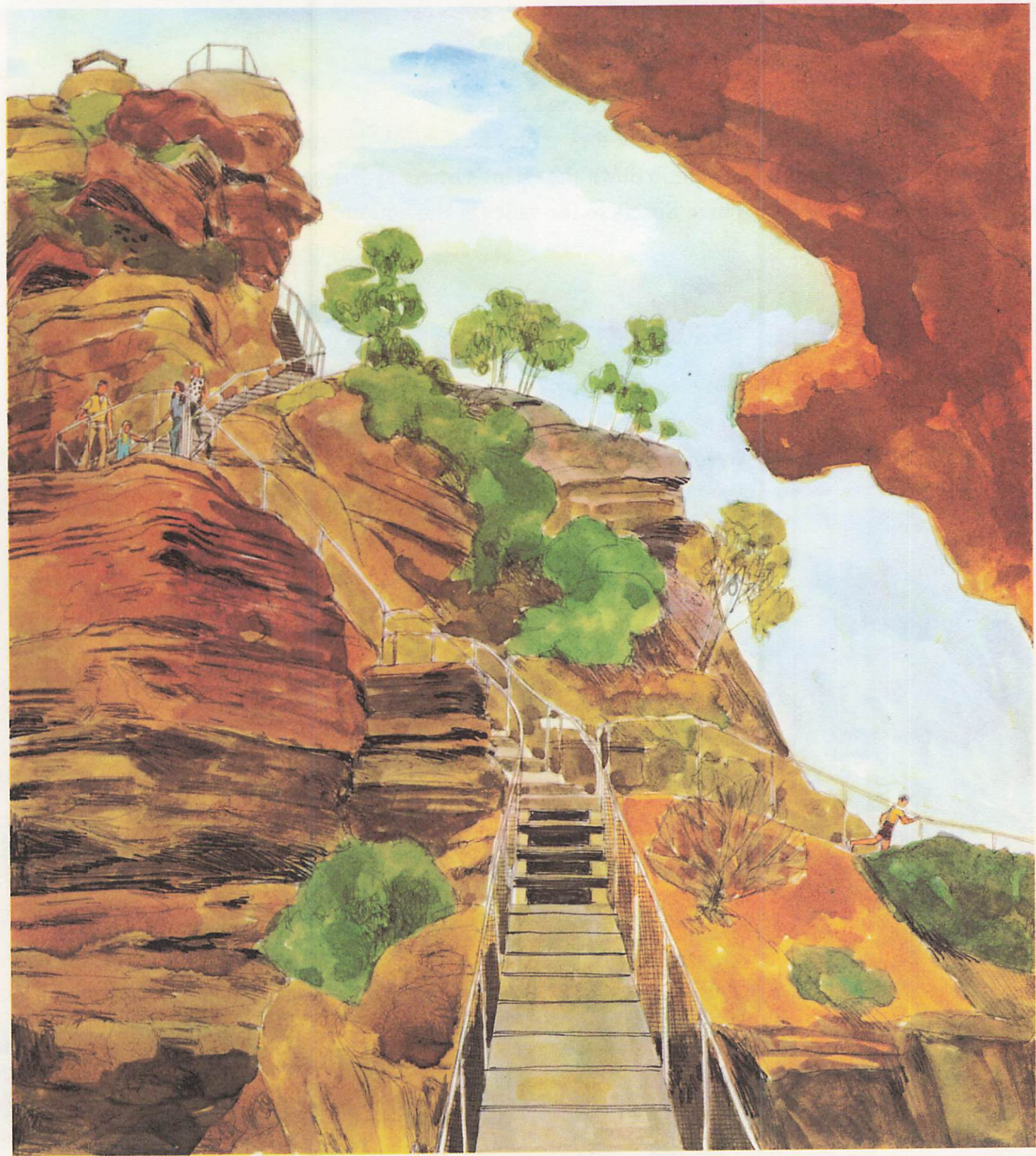


Next morning the family drove to Echo Point.

'The Three Sisters look just like they do in the pictures' breathed Katy.

'How would you like to climb down the Giant's Stairway?' asked Dad. 'It goes right down the side of The Three Sisters to the valley at the bottom.'





'Where is this stairway?' demanded Bill, anxious to be off.

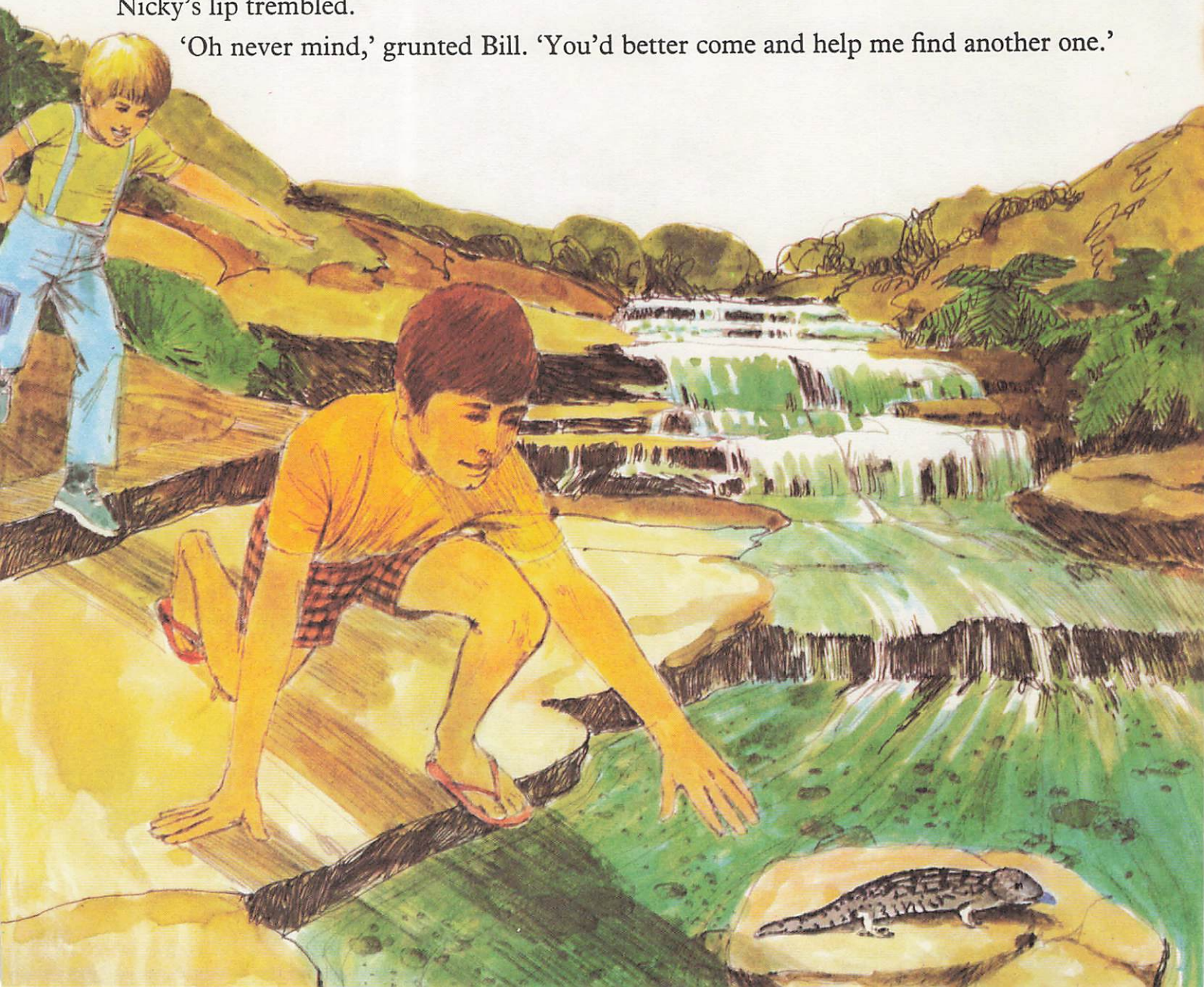
Bill raced off down the steep winding stairs. And by the time the others had caught up, Bill was perched on a rock in the middle of the stream trying to catch a lizard as it basked in the sun.

But as Nicky rushed forward to see, the lizard flashed away between the rocks.

'What did you have to do that for!' yelled Bill. 'I'd almost caught it.'

Nicky's lip trembled.

'Oh never mind,' grunted Bill. 'You'd better come and help me find another one.'





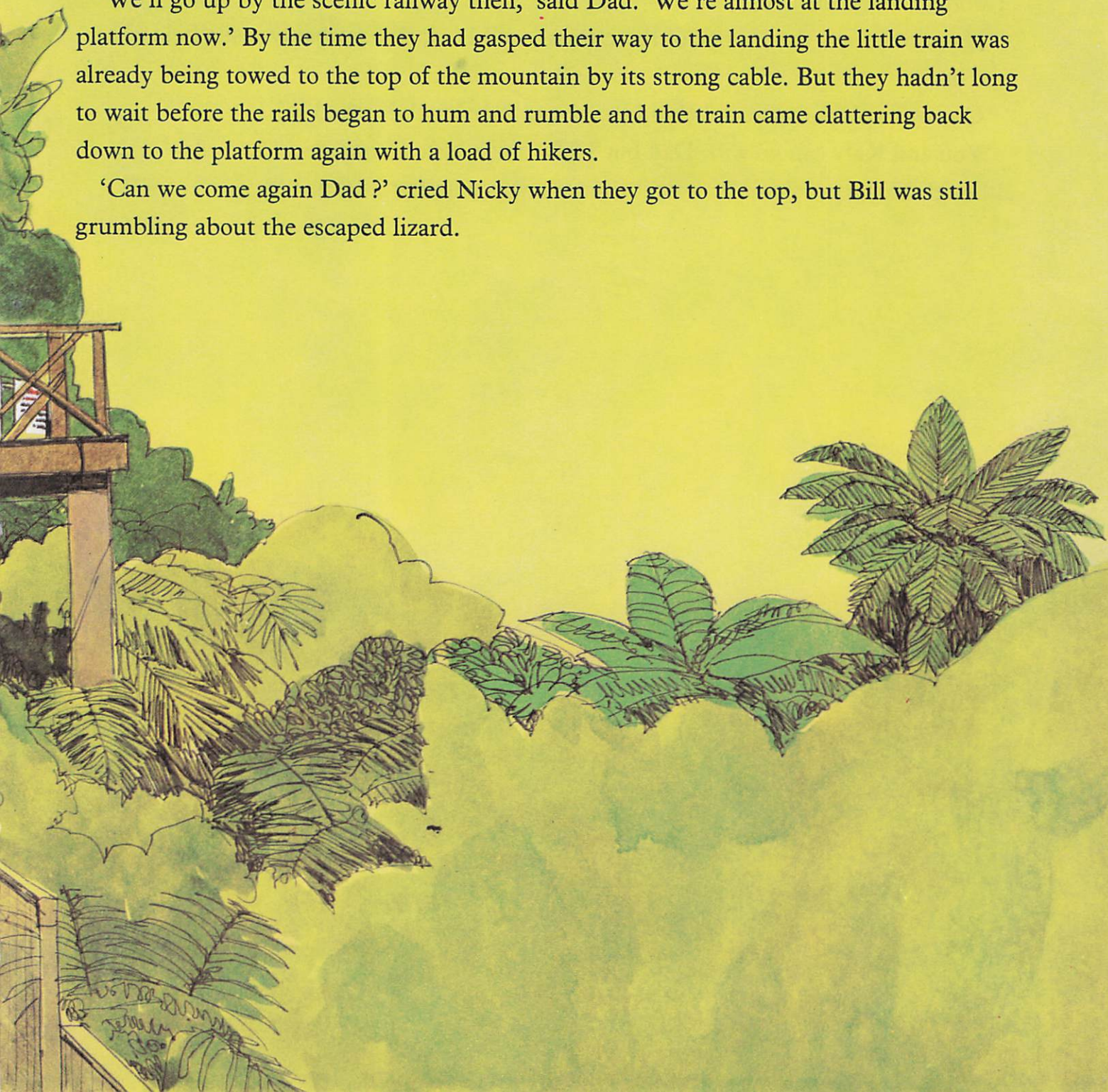
COALMINE &
LANDSLIDE

KATOOMBA FALLS
& 3 SISTERS

'I'm exhausted,' sighed Katy at last. 'I'll never be able to climb up all those steps.'

'We'll go up by the scenic railway then,' said Dad. 'We're almost at the landing platform now.' By the time they had gasped their way to the landing the little train was already being towed to the top of the mountain by its strong cable. But they hadn't long to wait before the rails began to hum and rumble and the train came clattering back down to the platform again with a load of hikers.

'Can we come again Dad?' cried Nicky when they got to the top, but Bill was still grumbling about the escaped lizard.



'Look our kookaburra's waiting for us,' said Katy as they pulled up outside the cottage.
'I wonder where he lives?'

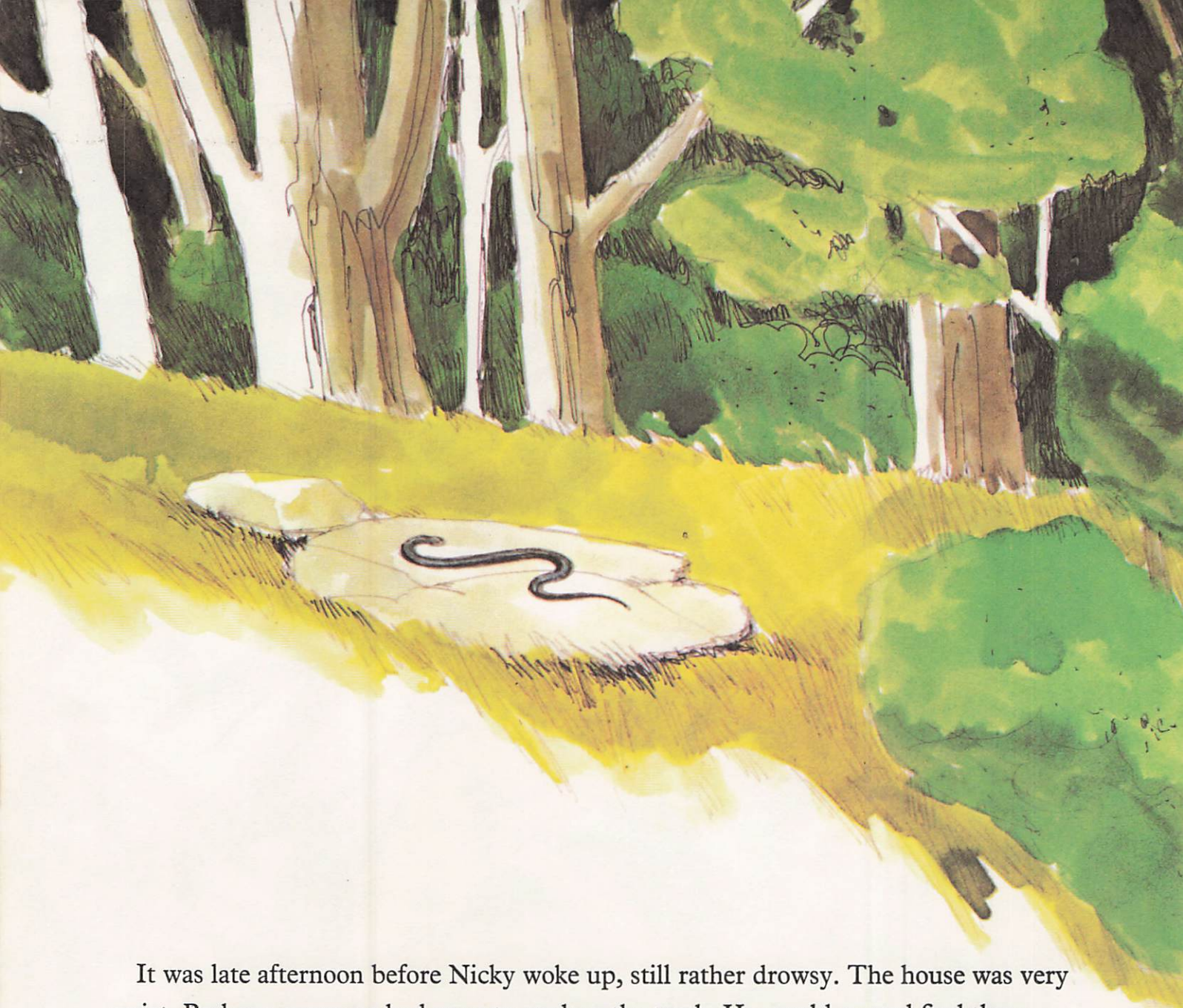
'He must have a nest in one of these trees,' said Dad. 'It's probably just a hole in a tree trunk.'

'Can we explore the track behind the house after lunch?' asked Bill.

'You and Katy can go with Dad but Nicky must have a rest,' said Mum. And although Nicky protested he wasn't tired, he was soon fast asleep.







It was late afternoon before Nicky woke up, still rather drowsy. The house was very quiet. Perhaps everyone had gone to explore the track. He would go and find them.

Jacky saw the little boy wandering down the track and followed him, flying from tree to tree.

‘Hello, kookaburra,’ called Nicky happily. He danced through the trees until he found a sunny clearing. And there, lying on a rock, was a small black snake.

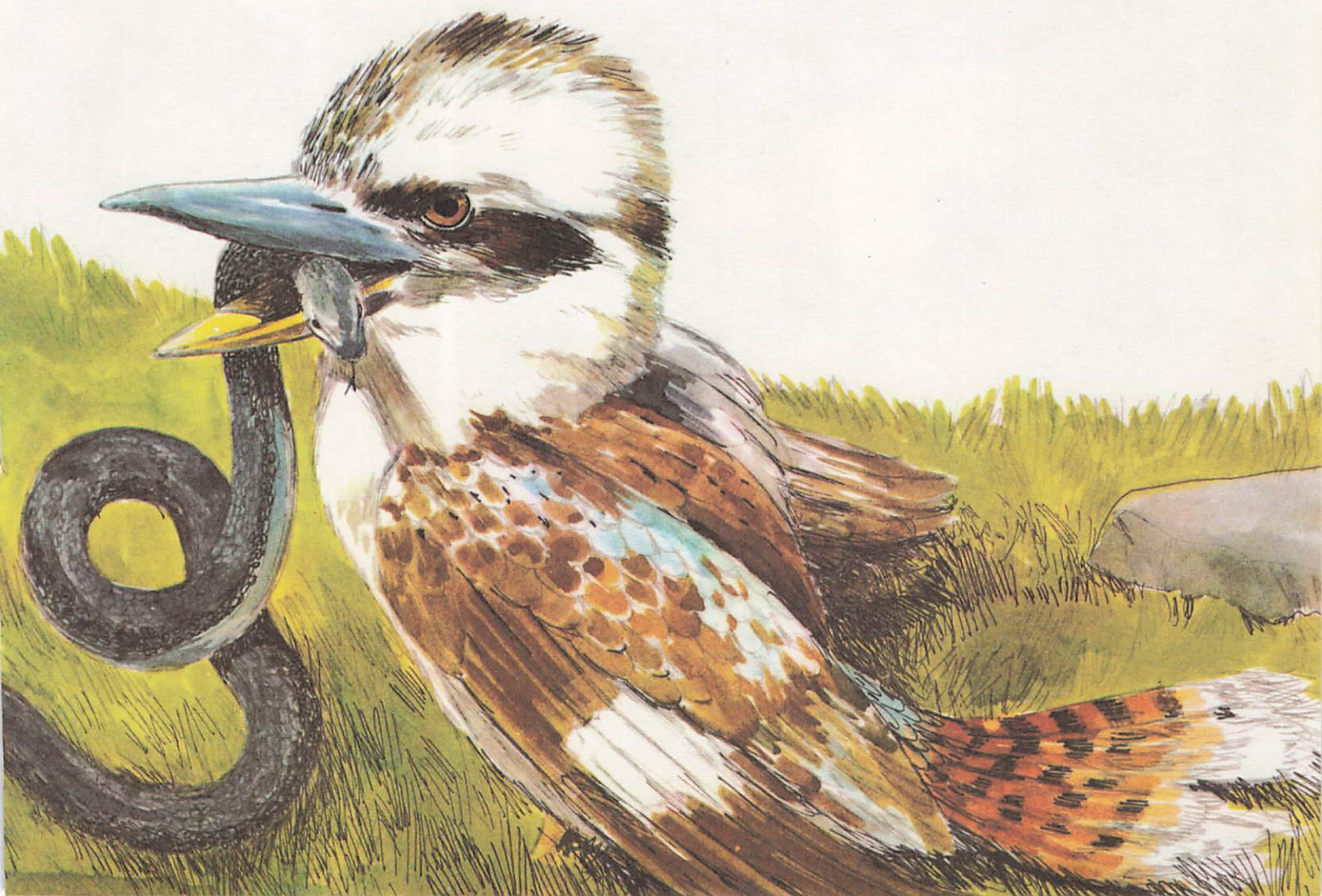
‘Hurray,’ shouted Nicky. ‘A lizard for Bill!’

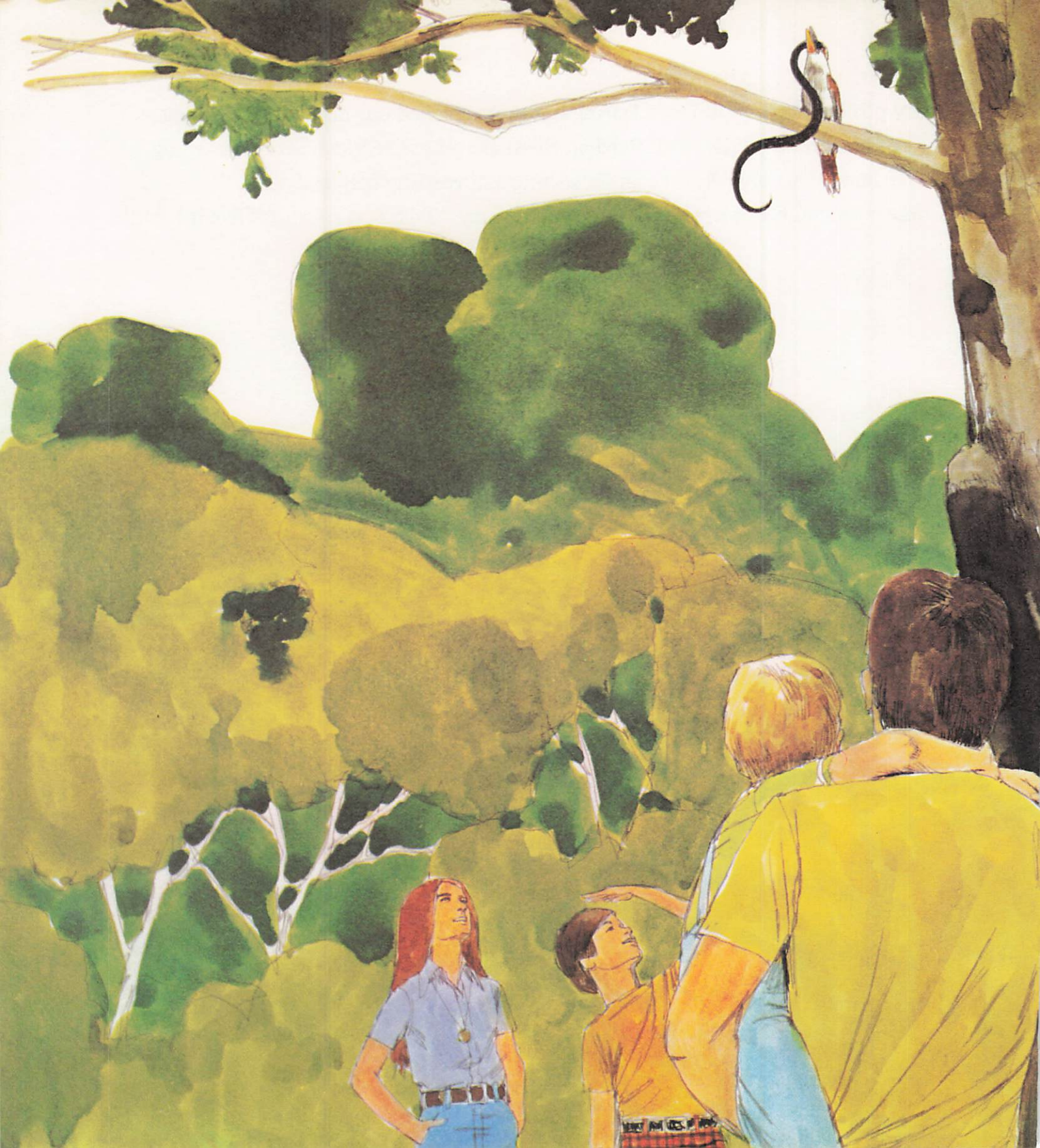


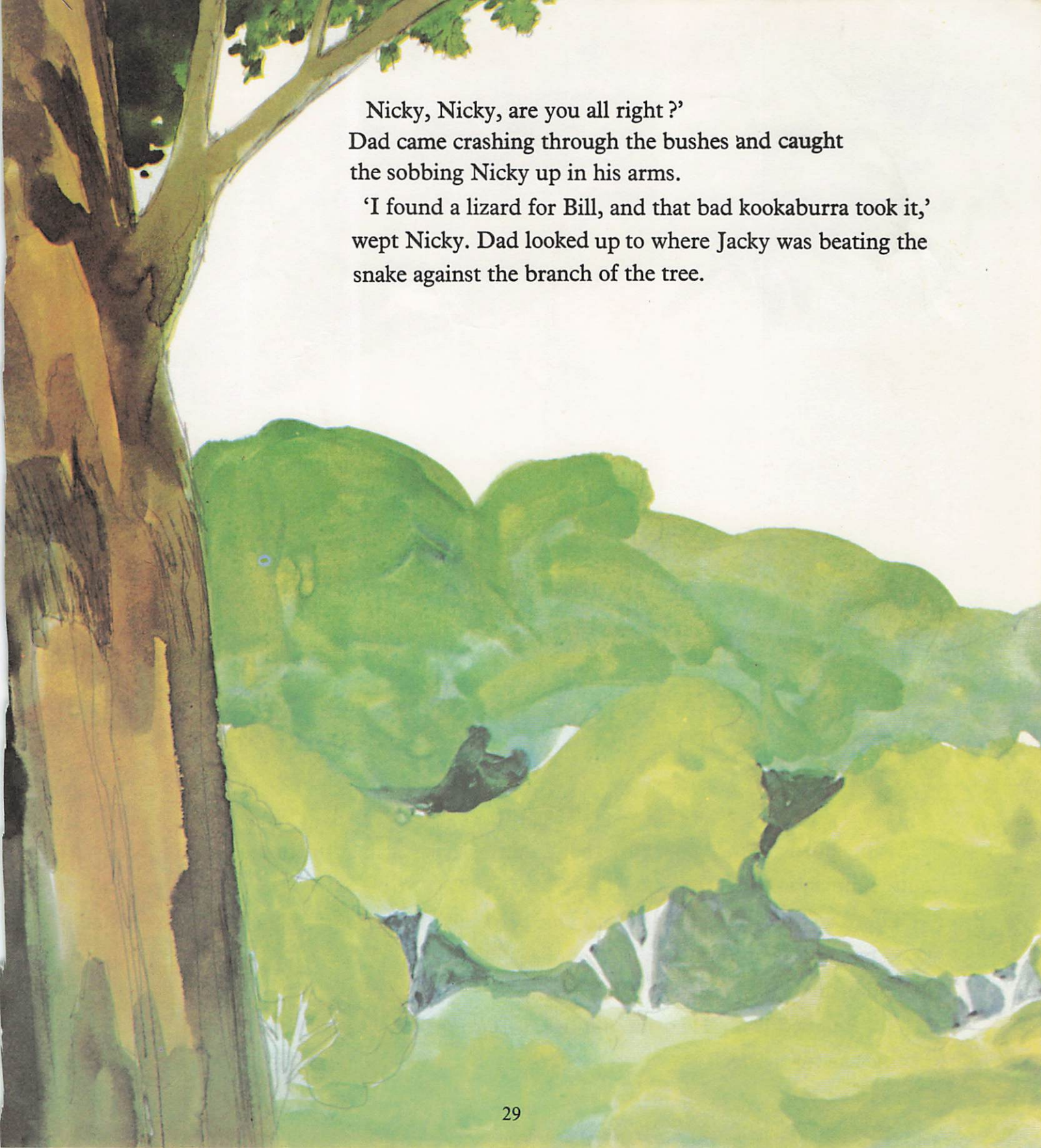


Nicky pushed his way into the clearing but as he reached out his hand something flashed past his head—Jacky had dived on the snake and seized its head in his strong beak. Up and up he flew with the snake lashing and twisting helplessly.

‘Come back you bad kookaburra!’ screamed Nicky. ‘That’s MY lizard. Give it back!’







Nicky, Nicky, are you all right ?'
Dad came crashing through the bushes and caught
the sobbing Nicky up in his arms.

'I found a lizard for Bill, and that bad kookaburra took it,'
wept Nicky. Dad looked up to where Jacky was beating the
snake against the branch of the tree.



Again and again the kookaburra battered the snake against the branch until it was quite limp and dead.

‘That’s a snake, not a lizard,’ said Dad, ‘so really he was a good kookaburra to snatch it away before it could hurt you.’

‘Did he do it to save Nicky?’ asked Bill.

‘No,’ laughed Dad. ‘He wanted it to eat. But for Nicky’s sake I’m certainly glad he likes snake for dinner!’



Each day the children fed Jacky until he grew so tame he would fly down to the back step whenever he saw the door open.

On the last day of the holidays Bill nailed a board to the big gum tree. Jacky couldn't read, so he didn't know what Katy had written.

But from that time on the people who came to spend their holidays at Gum Tree Cottage always had some food to spare for Jacky.





PLEASE FEED
THIS KOOKABURRA,
HE LIKES MEAT
HE'S A SPECIAL
KOOKABURRA



Rewi

the Red Deer

Written by Jack Lasenby
Illustrated by Nancy Finlayson

Golden Press





Billy Taylor stood still and waited for his father's gun to go off. Bang!
The deer fell.

"We got it!" Billy shouted.

While his father skinned the deer, Billy had a look round the clearing.
As he pushed through the long snow grass, he fell over something that
felt alive. Billy got a fright and he yelled.



Billy's father rushed over.

"It's a late spotty," he said. "It won't live without its mother." He still had his knife in his hand.

"Don't kill it," said Billy.

"She'd die by herself," said his father.

"I'll look after her. I'll feed her," Billy said. "Please, Dad!"

"All right. But you'll have to look after her properly."

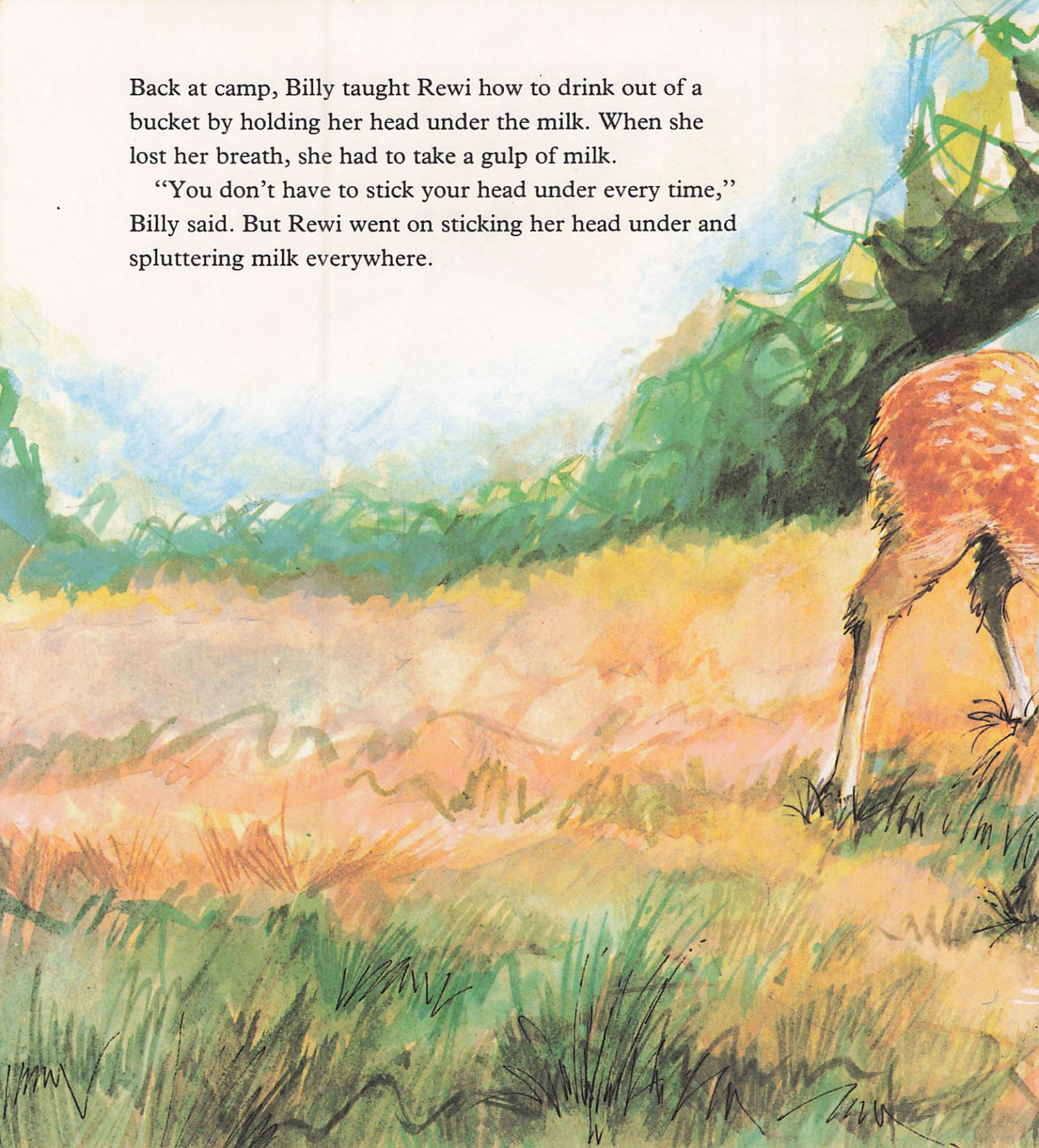
"I'll call her Rewi," said Billy.





Back at camp, Billy taught Rewi how to drink out of a bucket by holding her head under the milk. When she lost her breath, she had to take a gulp of milk.

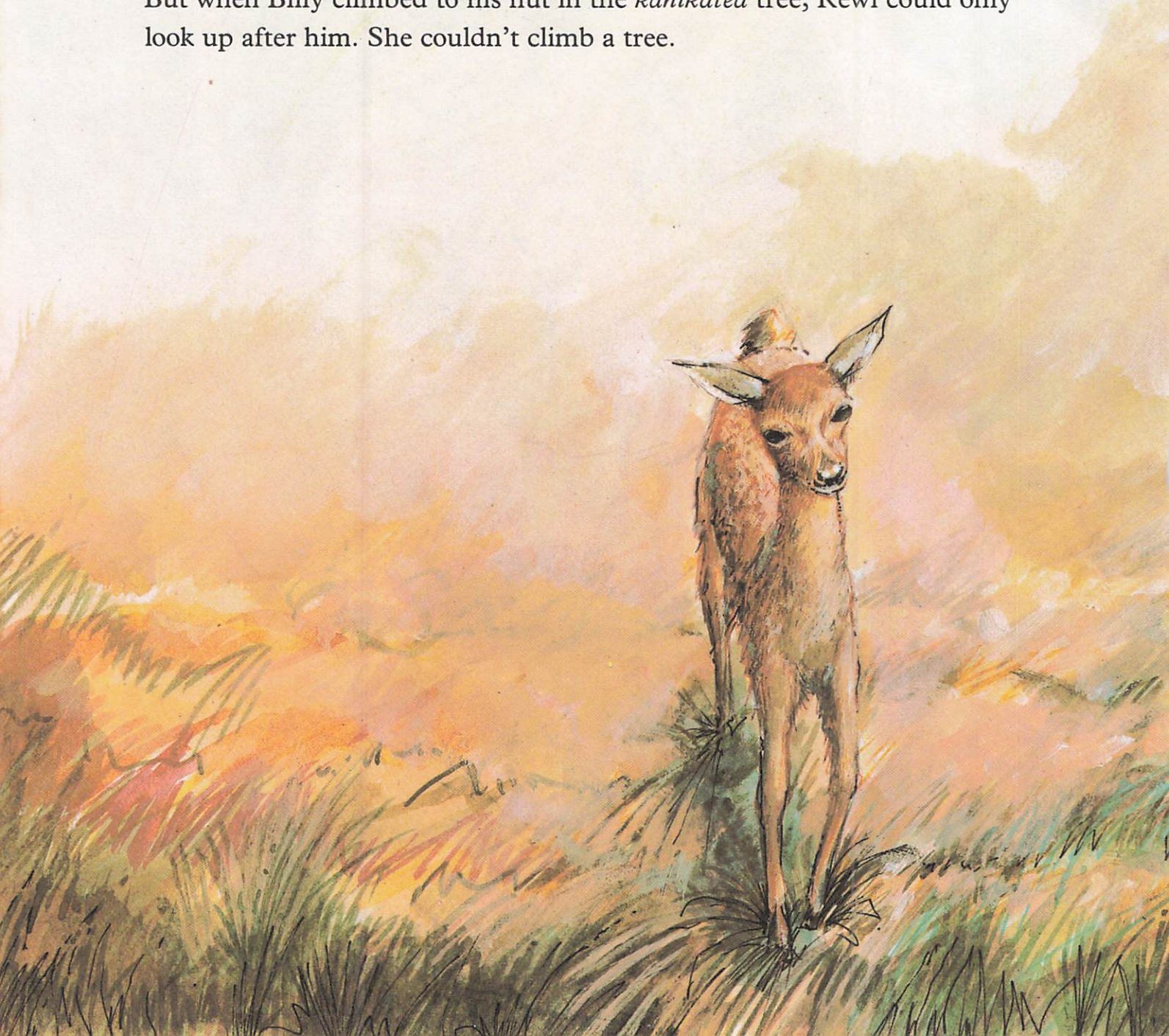
“You don’t have to stick your head under every time,” Billy said. But Rewi went on sticking her head under and spluttering milk everywhere.





Now when his father went round his possum traps, Billy stayed back in camp with Rewi.

They had races round the clearing. Rewi could jump over the logs behind the tent, but Billy had to run round them. Rewi won all the races. But when Billy climbed to his hut in the *kahikatea* tree, Rewi could only look up after him. She couldn't climb a tree.





One day, Billy said,

“Dad, Rewi’s finished all the milk-powder.”

“I’ve got to go round my traps,” said his father. “You’d better go down to the farm and get some more.”

“Rewi can go with me,” said Billy.

“Well, keep on the track,” said Mr Taylor. “Whatever you do, don’t try to cross the river.”

Billy and Rewi ran down the track into the dark bush. The river roared below them. After they crossed the big bush flat, it was dark among the trees, but it was warm and friendly.

Suddenly, they were out in the open. Rewi jumped in the air and ran round and round some sheep.

“They’re sheep, not deer!” Billy called. But Rewi didn’t seem to care.







At the bridge, Billy climbed down and drank from the river. Rewi stood on the bank and watched him.

“The water tastes good,” he said. “Don’t you want a drink?”

He couldn’t see the van that had just stopped on the bridge. Four big boys got out. One had a gun. They were going shooting deer.

“What are you staring at?” Billy said. He couldn’t see the boys and he couldn’t hear anything because of the river.



The boys had seen Rewi. "There's a deer!" they were shouting.

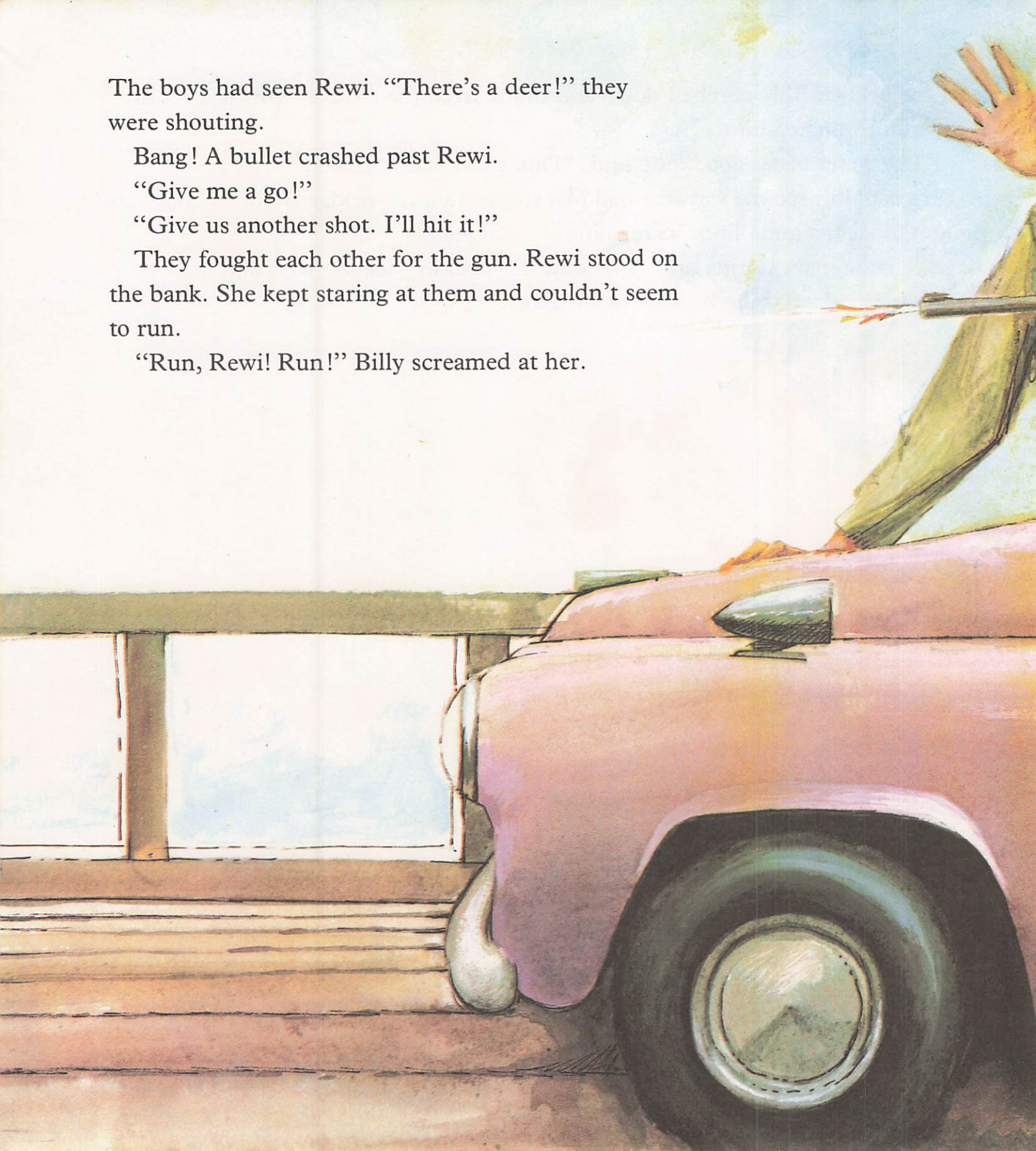
Bang! A bullet crashed past Rewi.

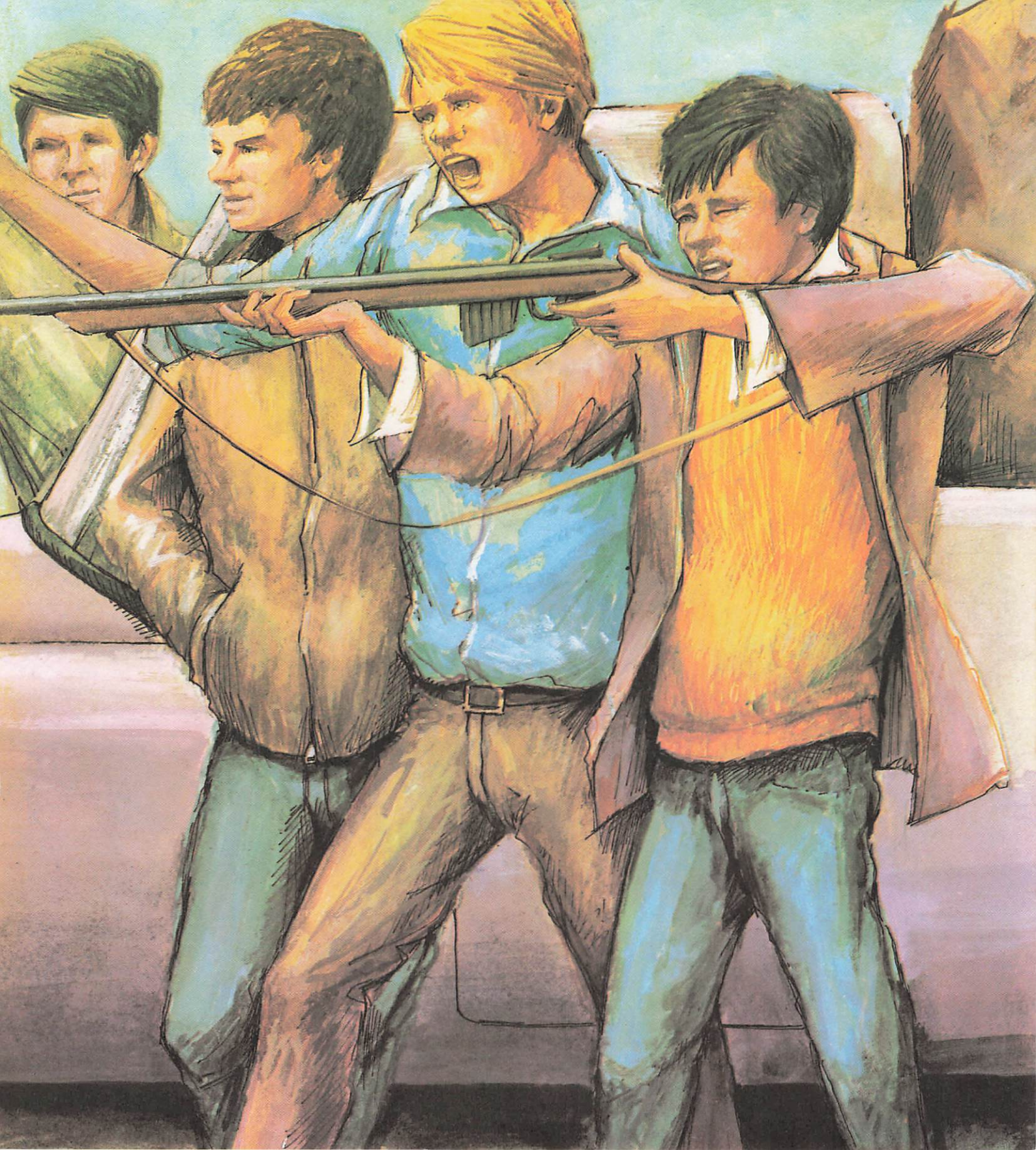
"Give me a go!"

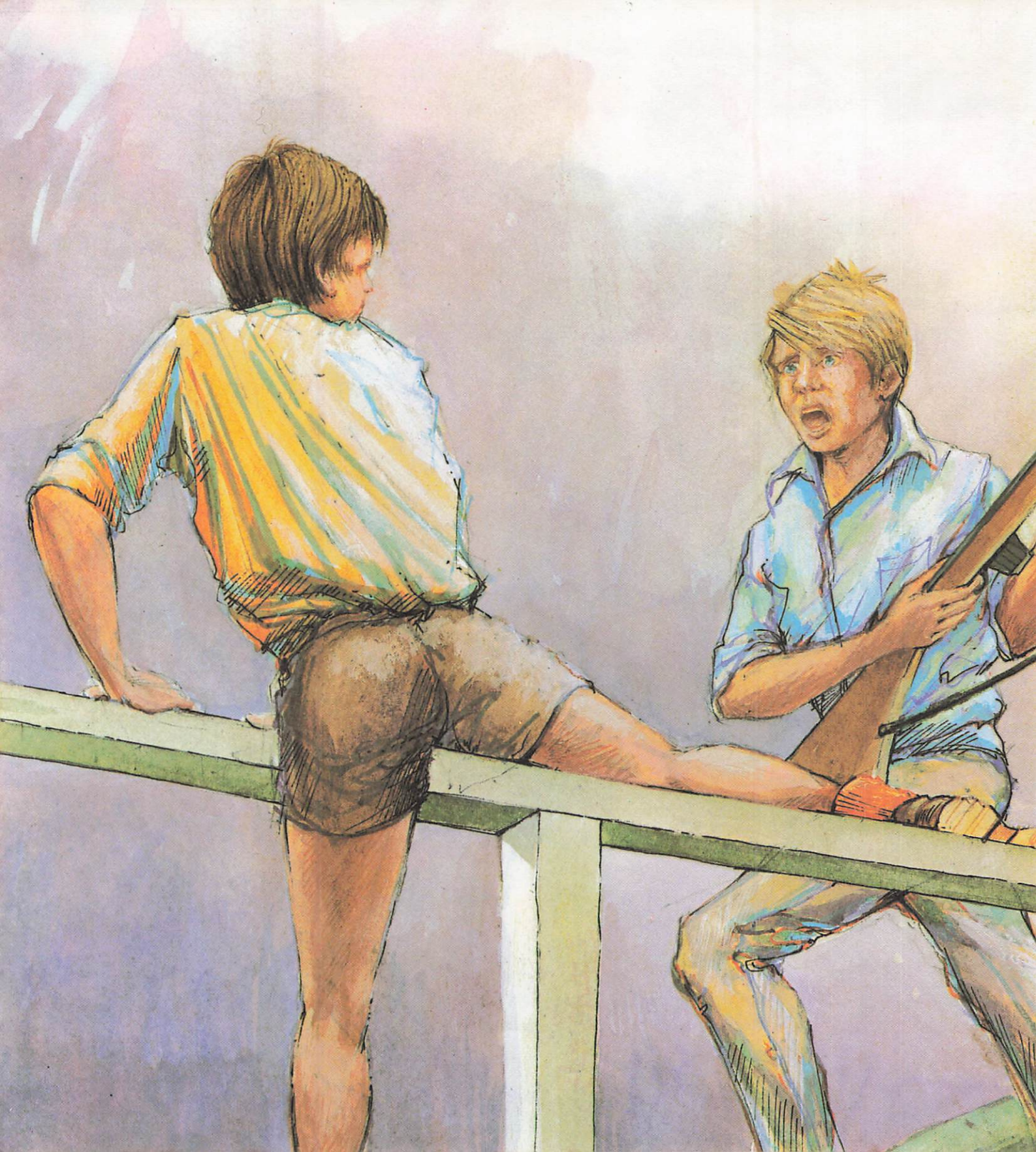
"Give us another shot. I'll hit it!"

They fought each other for the gun. Rewi stood on the bank. She kept staring at them and couldn't seem to run.

"Run, Rewi! Run!" Billy screamed at her.





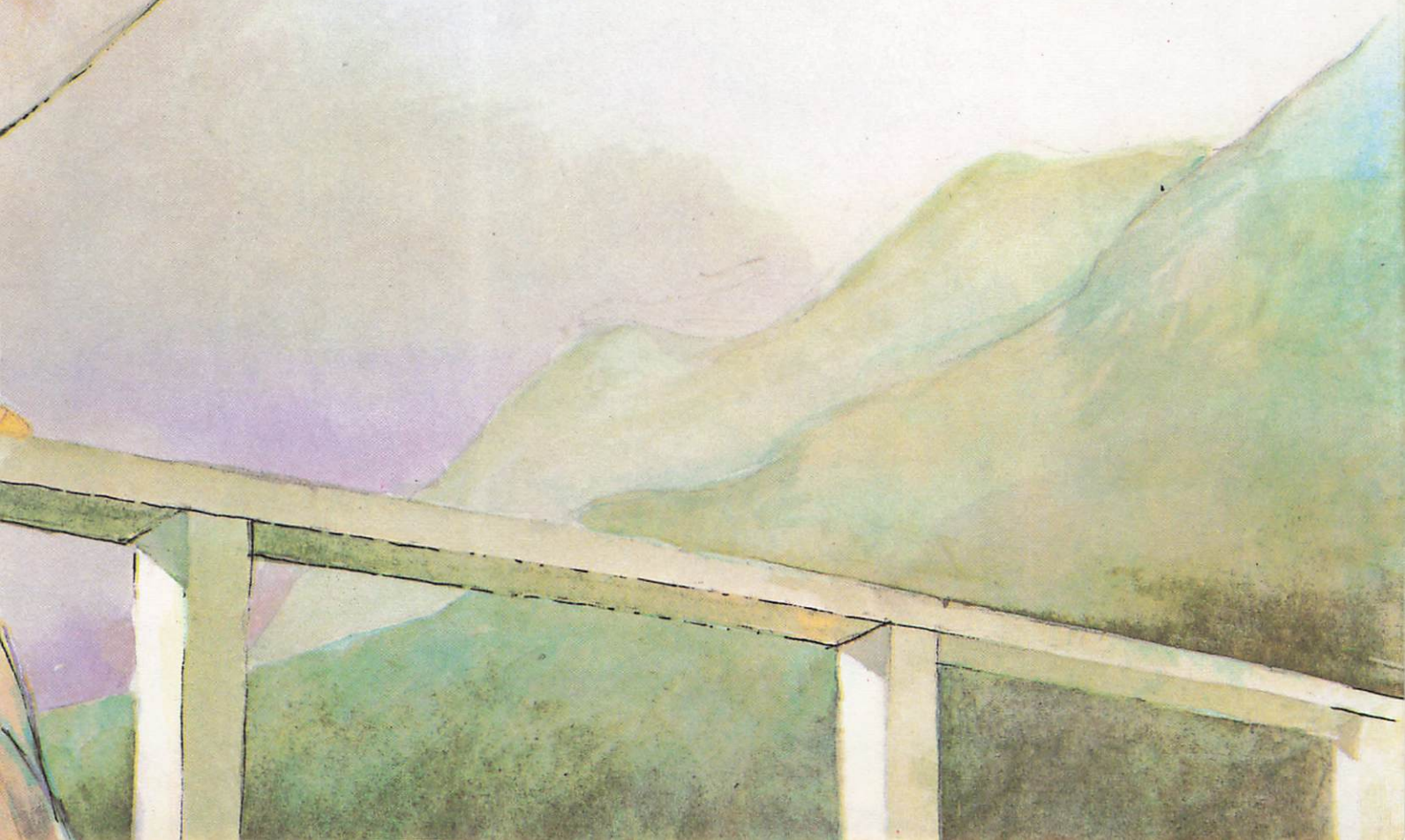
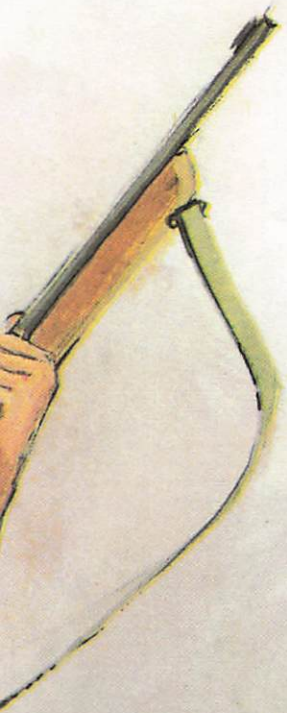


He ran up to the bank. There was another bang.

“You missed!”

“Can’t even hit a spotty!”

The boys were all shouting, so they didn’t hear Billy. Rewi ran among some teatree on the bank. One of the boys ran across the bridge with the rifle just as Billy climbed up the side.



“Don’t shoot her!” Billy yelled. He grabbed at the gun.

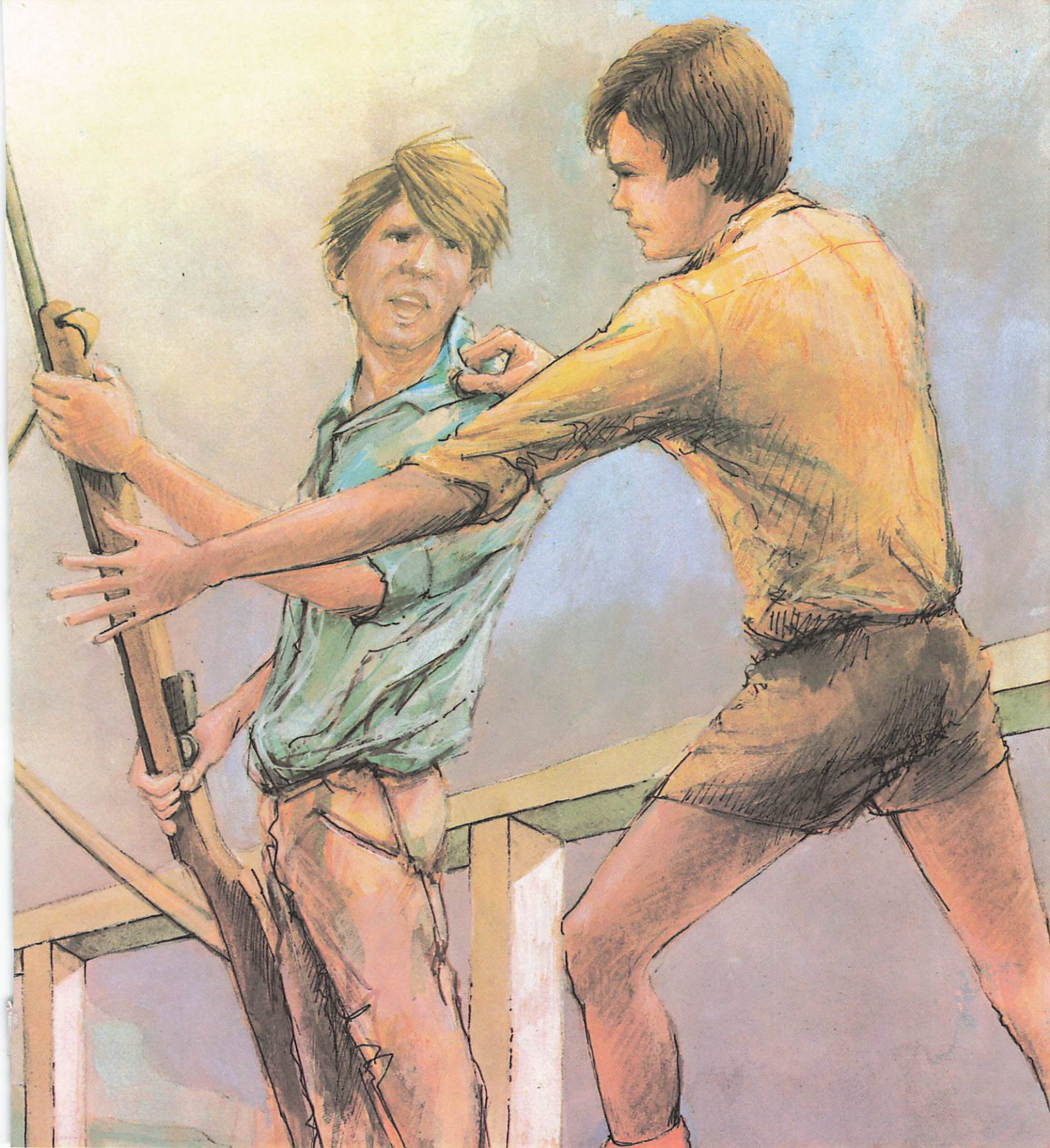
“Get out of my way!” the other boy said.

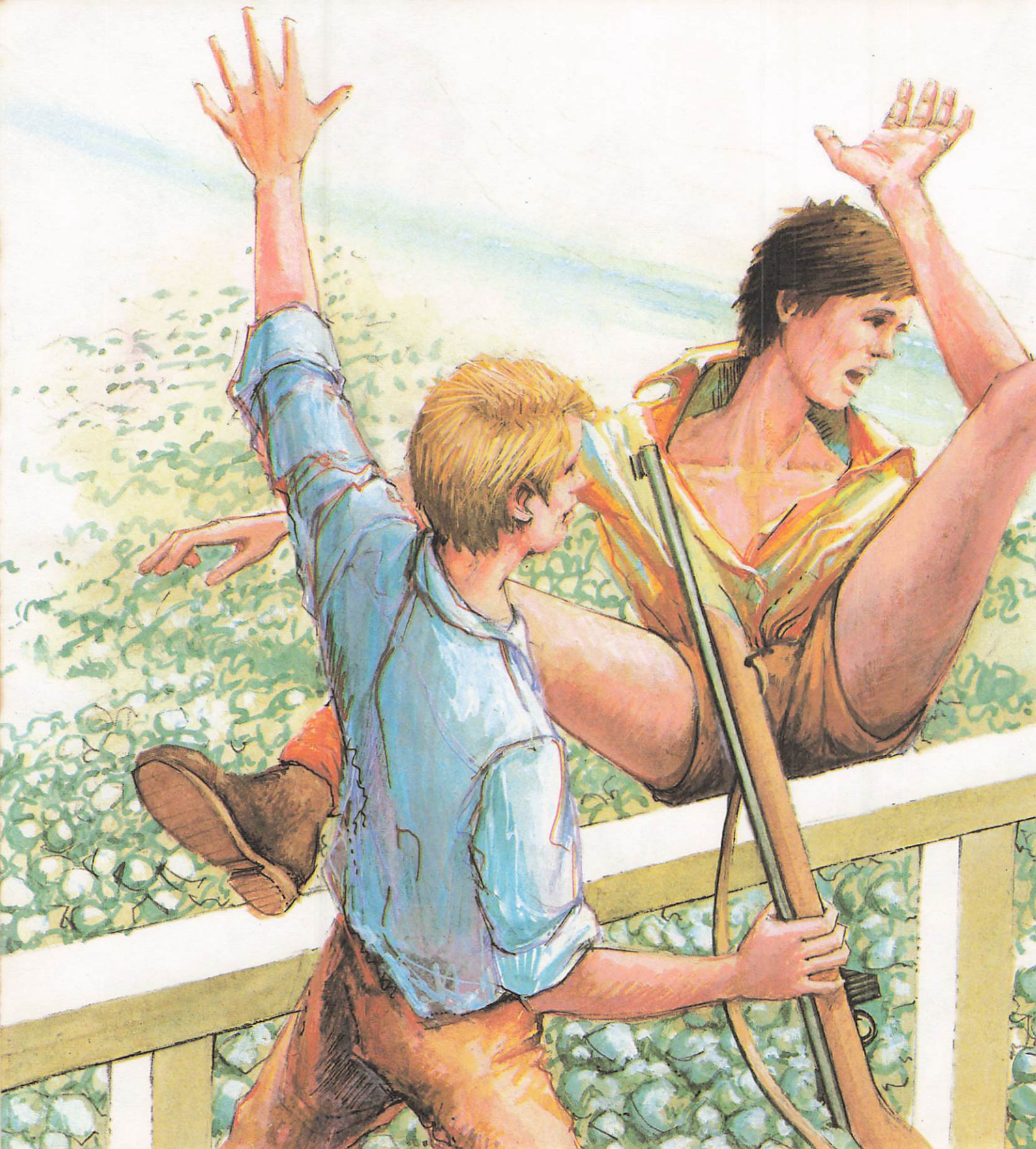
“She’s my deer!” Billy shouted at him.

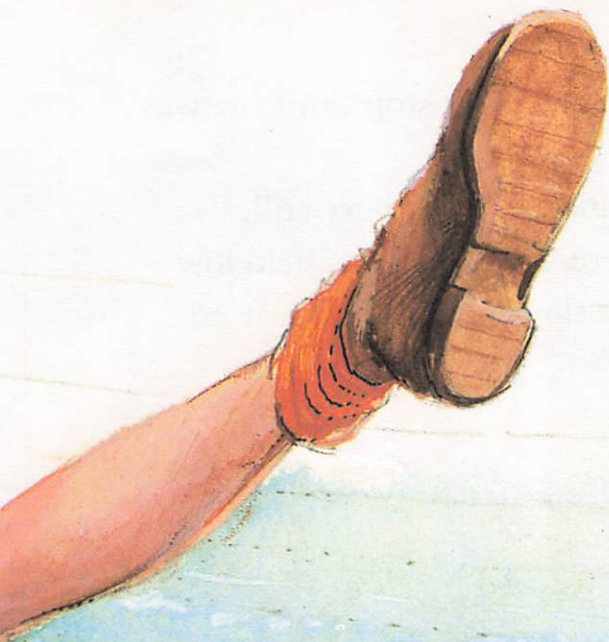
“She’s mine now,” said the boy, and he raised the gun and looked through the sights.

Billy looked round. Rewi had come out of the teatree and was running towards him and the boy with the gun. The boy fired.









Billy hit the gun up as the shot went off. The bullet went over Rewi's head. She ran back into the teatree.

"You made me miss!" The boy hit Billy with the gun. Billy fell backwards off the bridge.

The boys looked down at him. He lay still on the stones by the river.

"You've done it now!" said one of the other boys.

"Let's get out of here," said the boy with the gun. They got into the van and drove away.

Rewi ran back across the paddock and up the track. She didn't stop until she was in the camp.

She hid in the back of the tent between the two bunks. She lay very still, crouched low on the floor. She was hard to see in there. Her head was held low and nothing moved, not even her ears. Her breathing slowed and there was no sound from her.





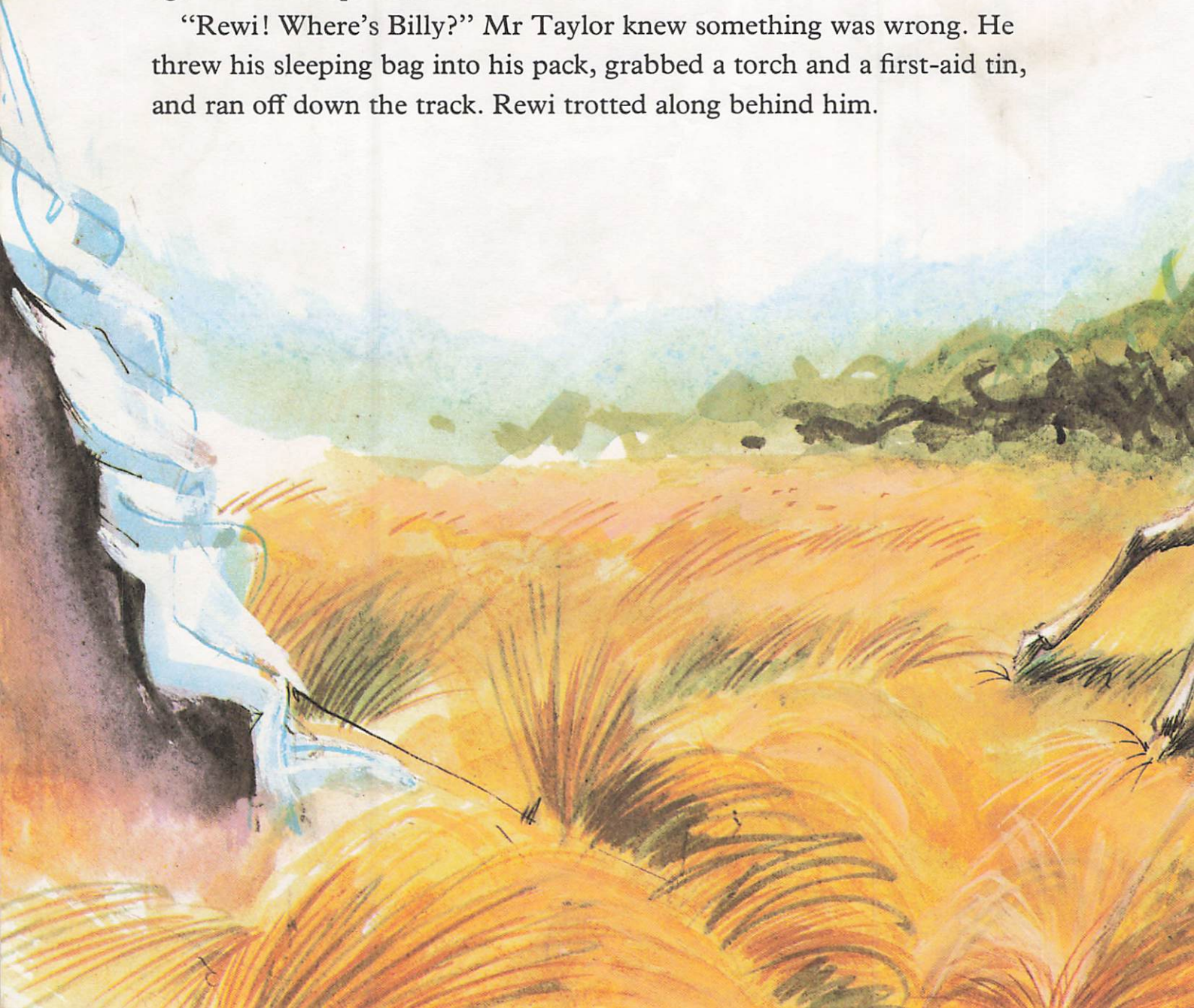
Mr Taylor called out, "I'm back!"

Nobody answered him.

"Billy!" he called. "Where are you?"

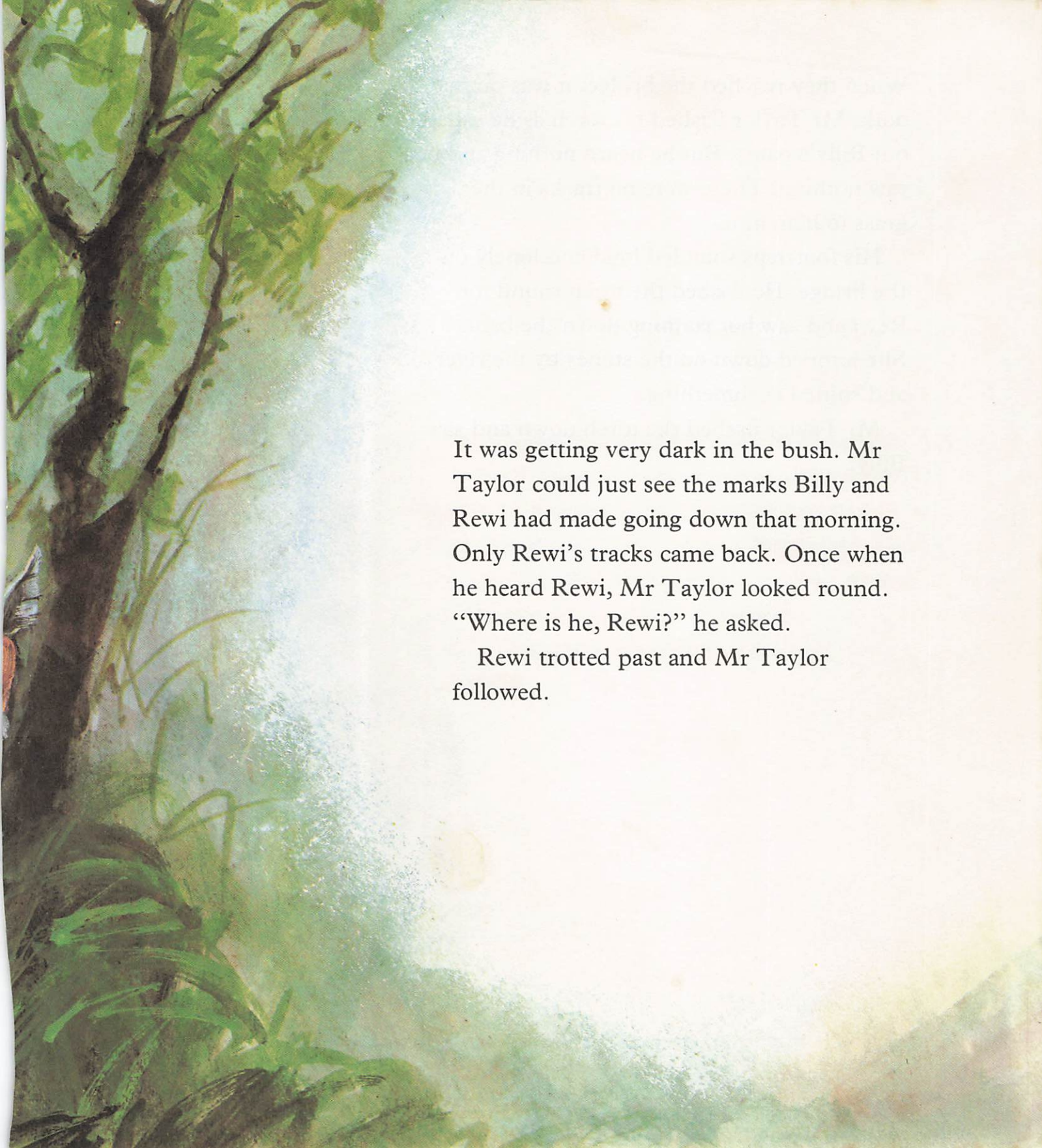
He looked in the tent. "They should have been back hours ago," he muttered. He didn't see Rewi lying there. He went outside and called again. Rewi crept out and stood beside him.

"Rewi! Where's Billy?" Mr Taylor knew something was wrong. He threw his sleeping bag into his pack, grabbed a torch and a first-aid tin, and ran off down the track. Rewi trotted along behind him.









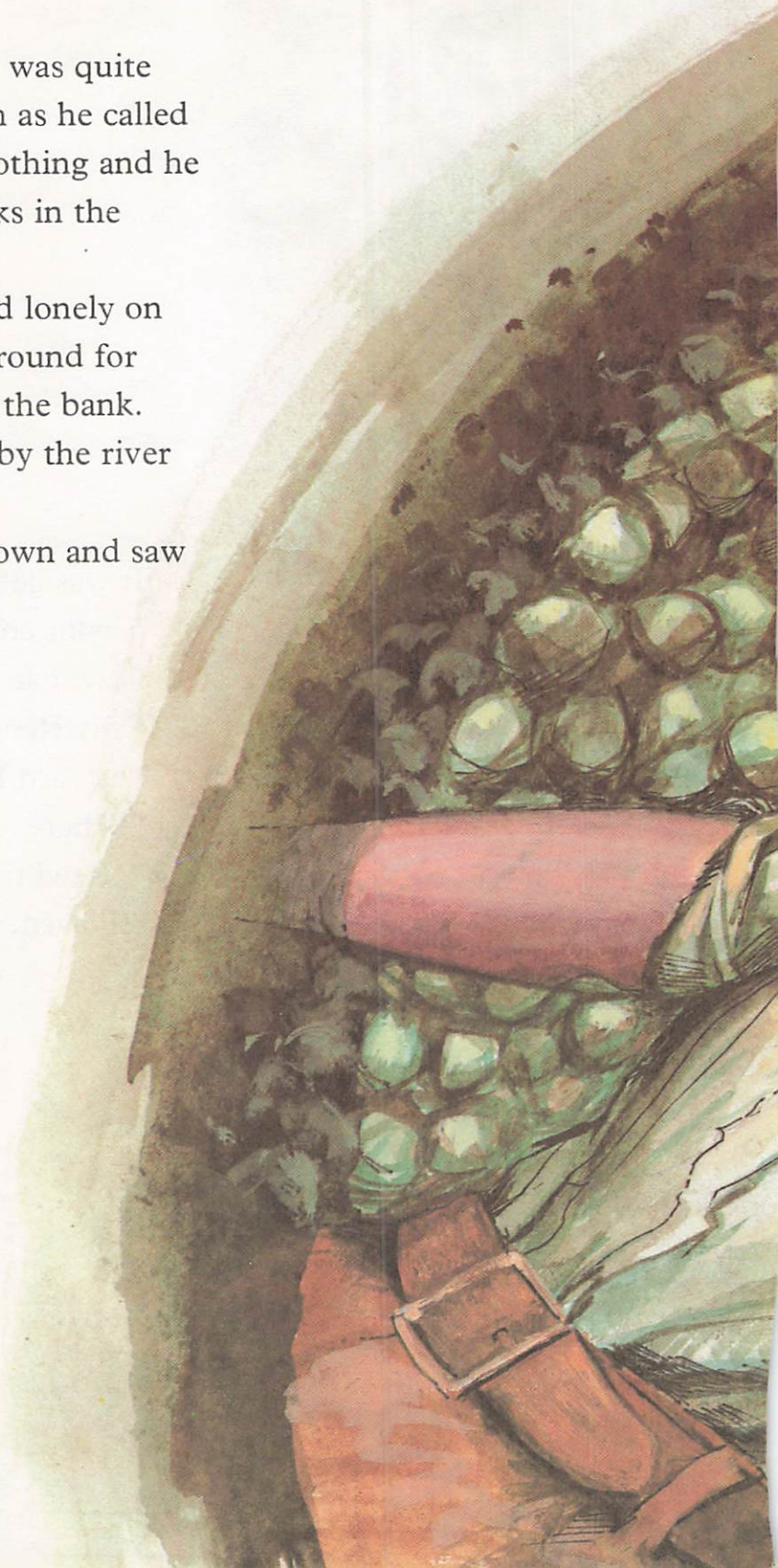
It was getting very dark in the bush. Mr Taylor could just see the marks Billy and Rewi had made going down that morning. Only Rewi's tracks came back. Once when he heard Rewi, Mr Taylor looked round. "Where is he, Rewi?" he asked.

Rewi trotted past and Mr Taylor followed.

When they reached the bridge, it was quite dark. Mr Taylor flashed his torch as he called out Billy's name. But he heard nothing and he saw nothing. There were no tracks in the grass to help him.

His footsteps sounded loud and lonely on the bridge. He flashed the torch round for Rewi and saw her running down the bank. She jumped down on the stones by the river and sniffed at something.

Mr Taylor flashed the torch down and saw Billy.





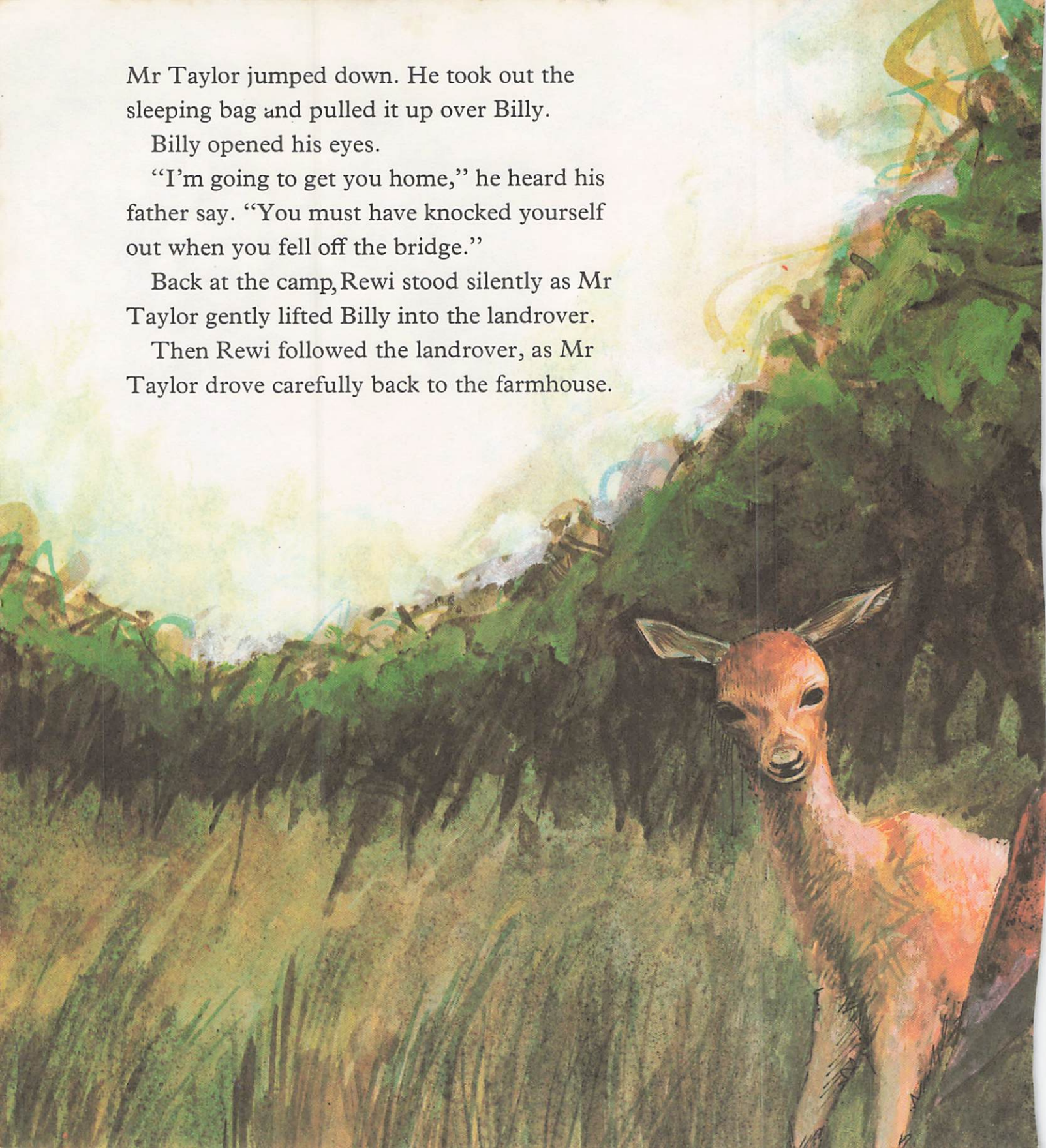
Mr Taylor jumped down. He took out the sleeping bag and pulled it up over Billy.

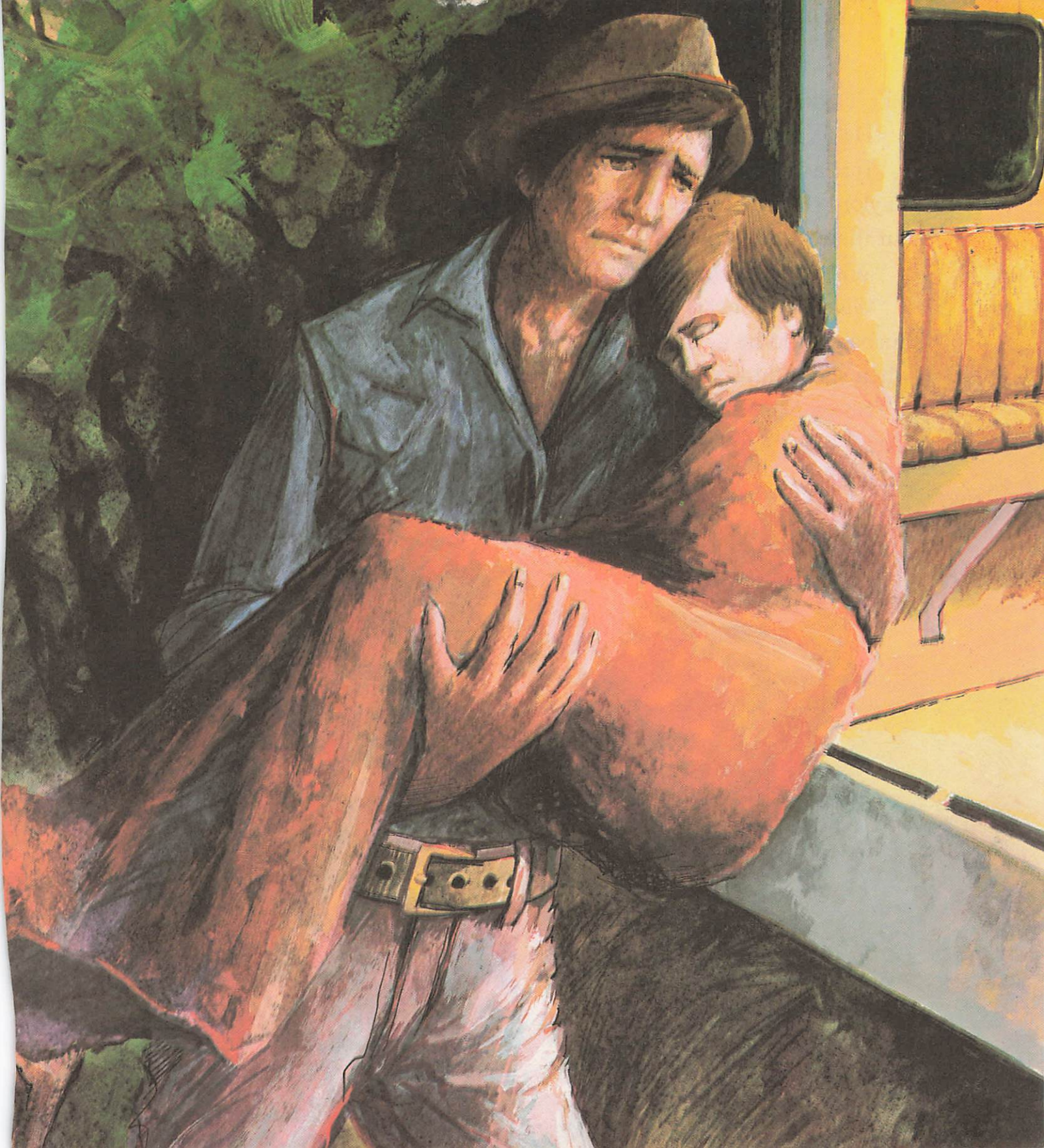
Billy opened his eyes.

"I'm going to get you home," he heard his father say. "You must have knocked yourself out when you fell off the bridge."

Back at the camp, Rewi stood silently as Mr Taylor gently lifted Billy into the landrover.

Then Rewi followed the landrover, as Mr Taylor drove carefully back to the farmhouse.





Mrs Taylor put Billy to bed.

"He's very pale," she said.

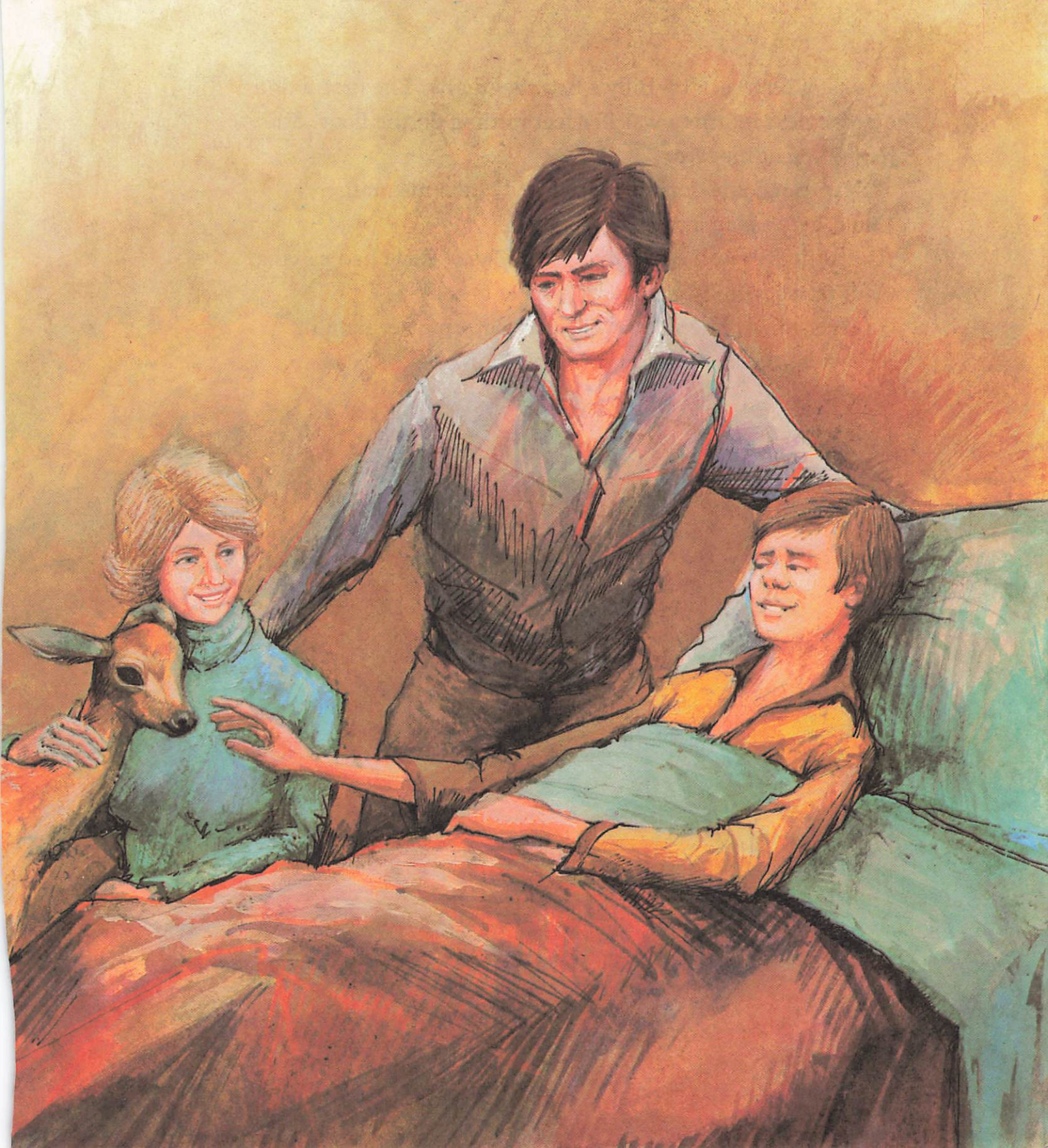
"Just as well Rewi found him," said Mr Taylor. "He might have died if he'd stayed out there all night."

"What does she eat?" asked Mrs Taylor.

"Give her a bucket of milk," said her husband, and he grinned. "But watch out when she splutters."

"She can splutter all over the kitchen if she likes!" said Mrs Taylor. "She probably saved Billy's life."





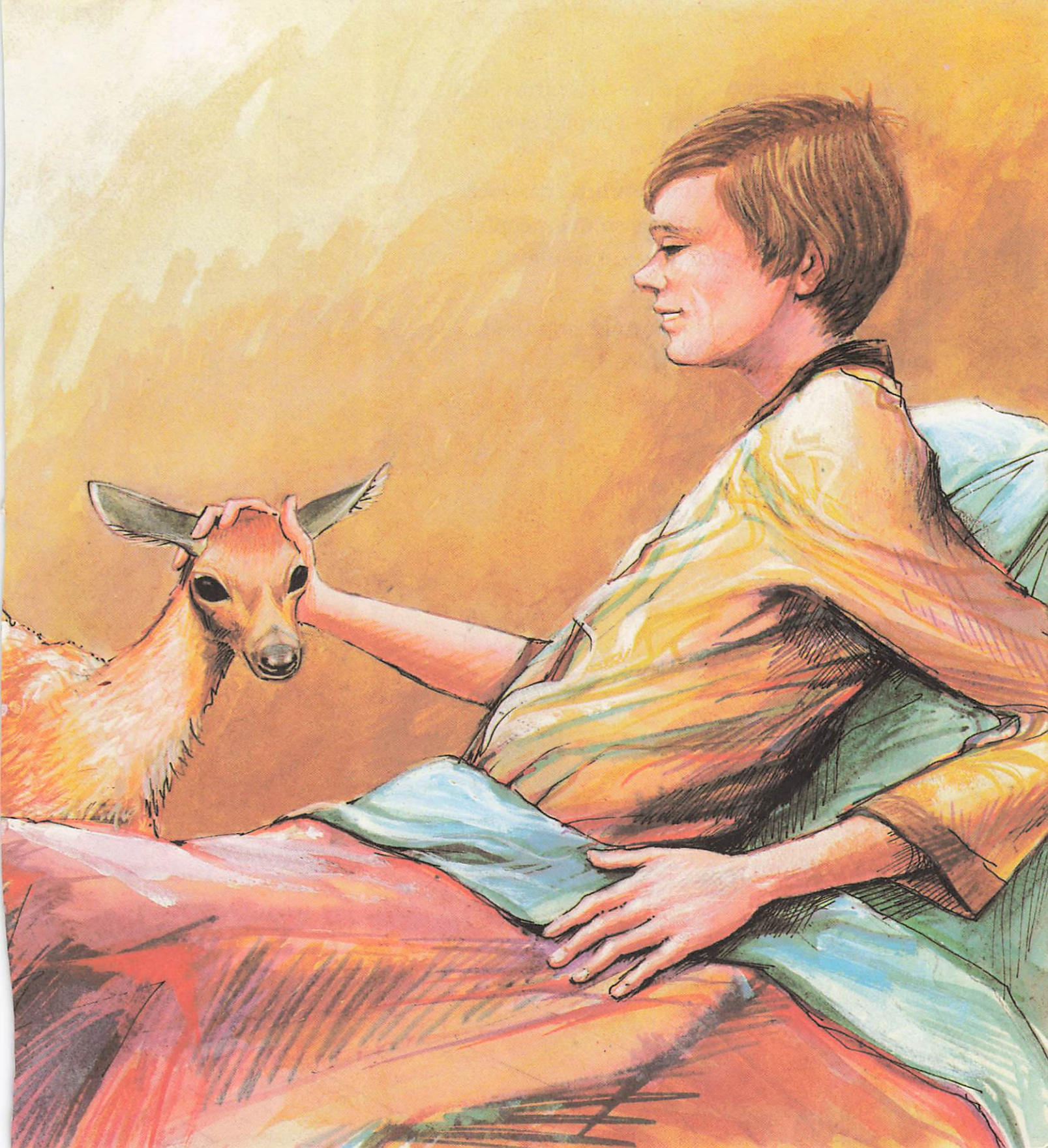
Rewi slept on a sack by Billy's bed that night. The first sound he heard next morning was her feet rattling on the floor. She was sniffing at his face.

"Rewi can come outside for a drink," said his mother.
"You'd better stay in bed."

But Billy was well enough to get up later. Rewi had eaten a row of lettuces. Billy gave her a bucket of milk.

"Never mind," he said, as she came up spluttering milk everywhere. "Dad says you saved my life!"

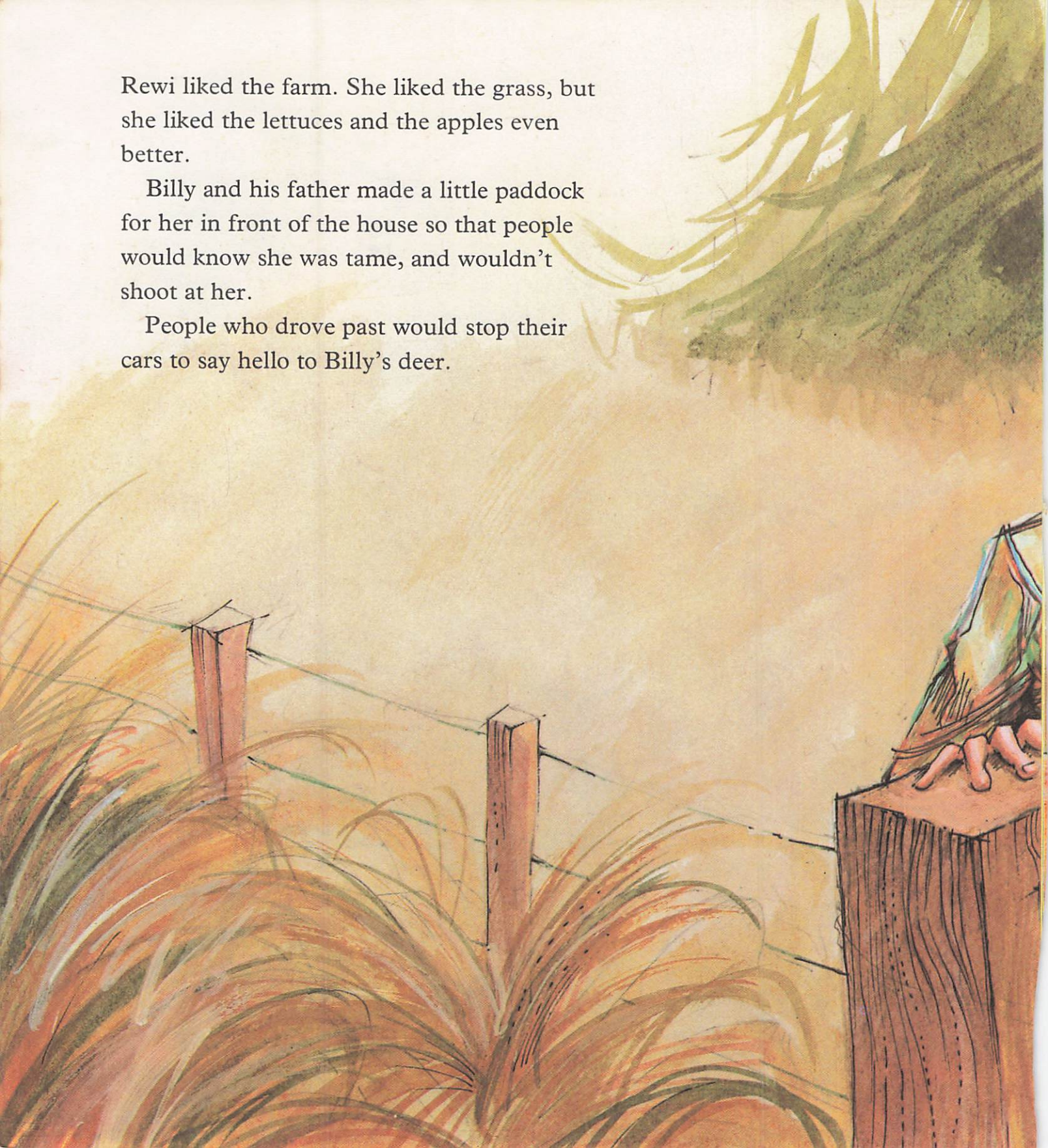


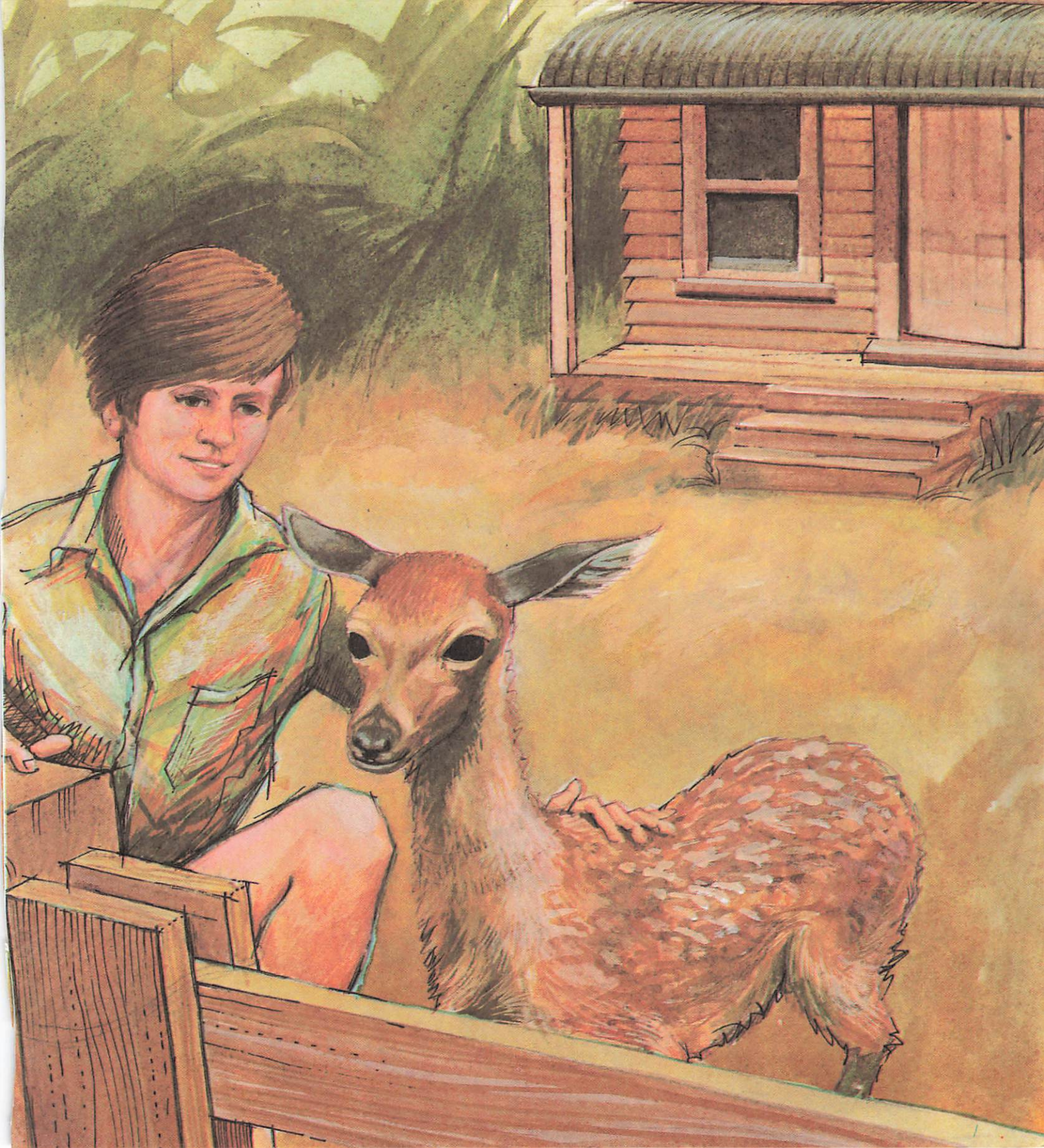


Rewi liked the farm. She liked the grass, but she liked the lettuces and the apples even better.

Billy and his father made a little paddock for her in front of the house so that people would know she was tame, and wouldn't shoot at her.

People who drove past would stop their cars to say hello to Billy's deer.







Charlie

the cheeky Kea

Written by Jack Lasenby

Illustrated by Nancy Finlayson

Golden Press



One day, Jim the ranger climbed the mountain to get some photos of the keas that lived there.

While Jim put up his tent, one very cheeky kea pecked at his lunch. It stole some chocolate. Then it pecked at his pack.

“Get out, you cheeky kea!” Jim said.

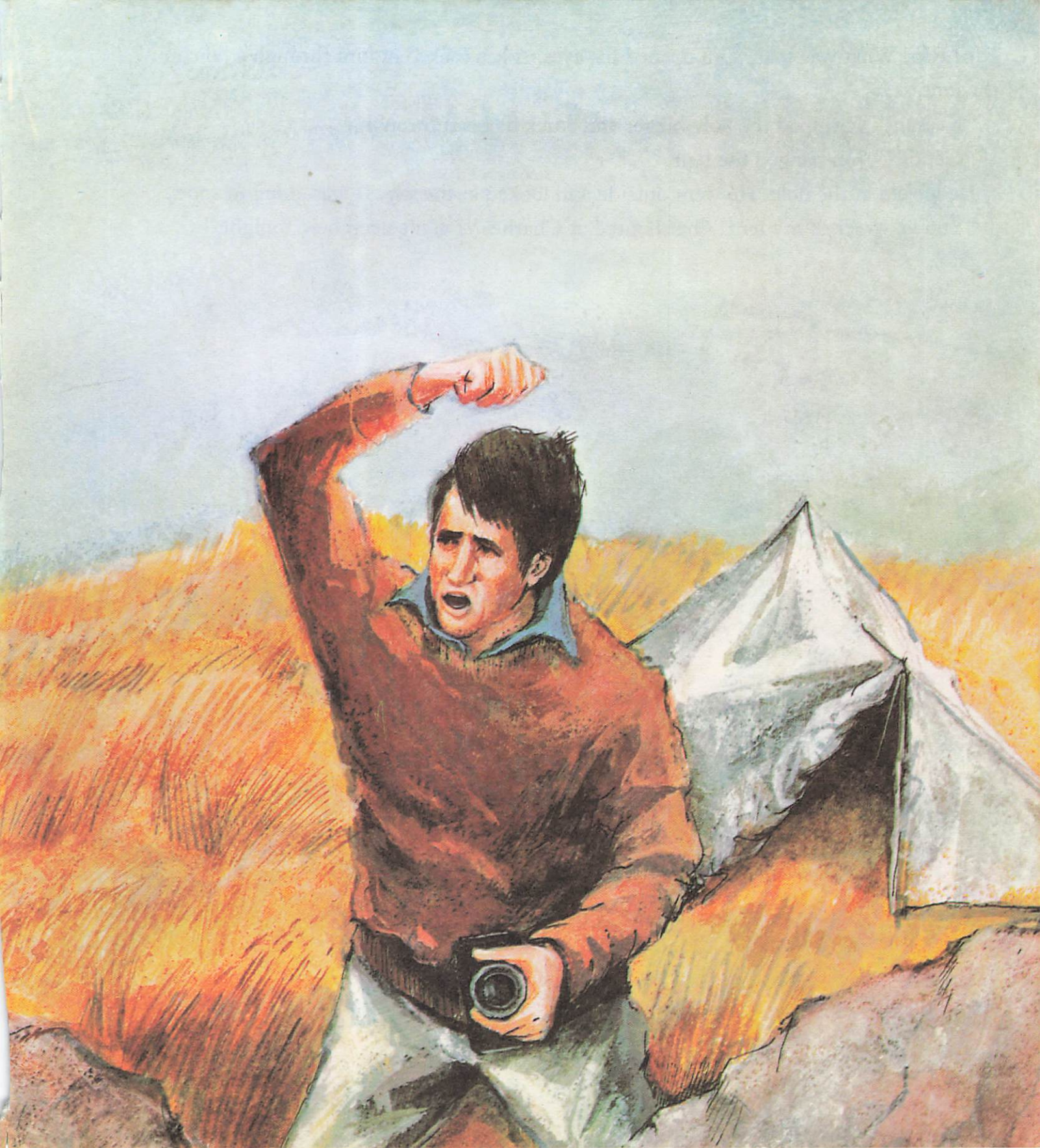
That night, as he got into his sleeping bag, the cheeky kea hopped on a rock and watched him.

“Kee-ah!” it screamed. “Kee-ah!”

“I’ll call him Charlie,” Jim said to himself, “Charlie the Cheeky Kea!”

Jim snuggled down in the sleeping bag and went to sleep.





Rip! Rip! What was that? Jim opened his eyes. A kea looked at him through a hole in the tent.

“Kee-ah!” It ripped the hole bigger and stuck its head through.

“Get off!” Jim banged the tent.

He looked at the hole. He went outside and looked at the sky. It was going to snow.

“You’ve wrecked my tent!” he shouted at Charlie. “I can’t sleep here tonight.”







Jim decided to go down to his hut. As he put on his boots, Charlie hopped inside his pack.

“Get out of there!” Jim shouted. He threw his boot at the pack.

Clump!

Charlie jumped out. He hopped sideways to the boot and pulled out the lace.

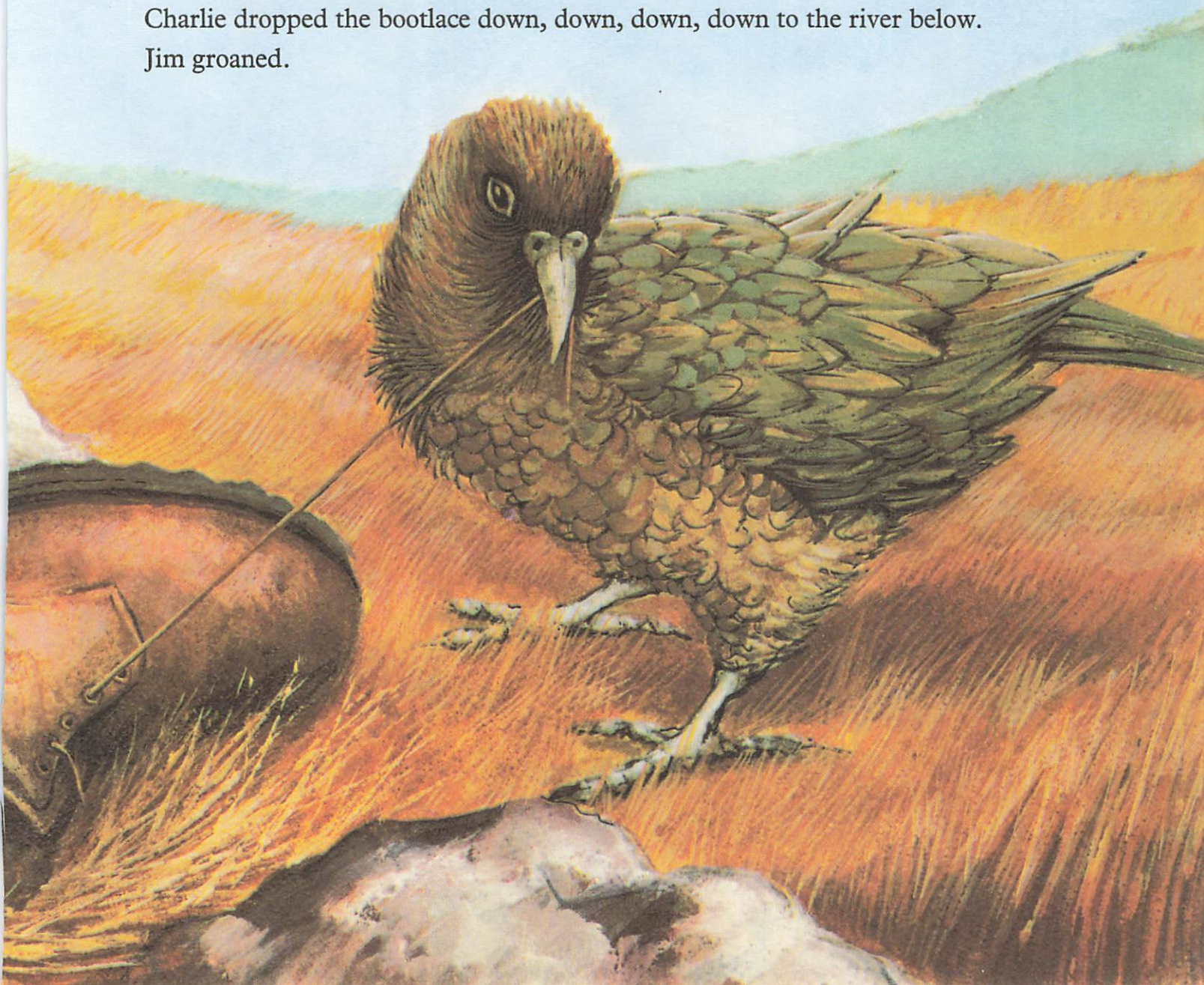
“Leave that alone!” Jim shouted.

Charlie flew off. He flew away over the valley.

“Bring that back!” Jim shouted.

Charlie dropped the bootlace down, down, down, down to the river below.

Jim groaned.





Down at the hut, Pete laughed as Jim hopped towards the door.

"Who's your friend?" he asked.

"That's Charlie," said Jim. He took off his boots and socks.

"He followed me down the mountain.

"He ate my lunch.

"He ate my chocolate.

"He pecked my pack.

"He ripped the roof of my tent.

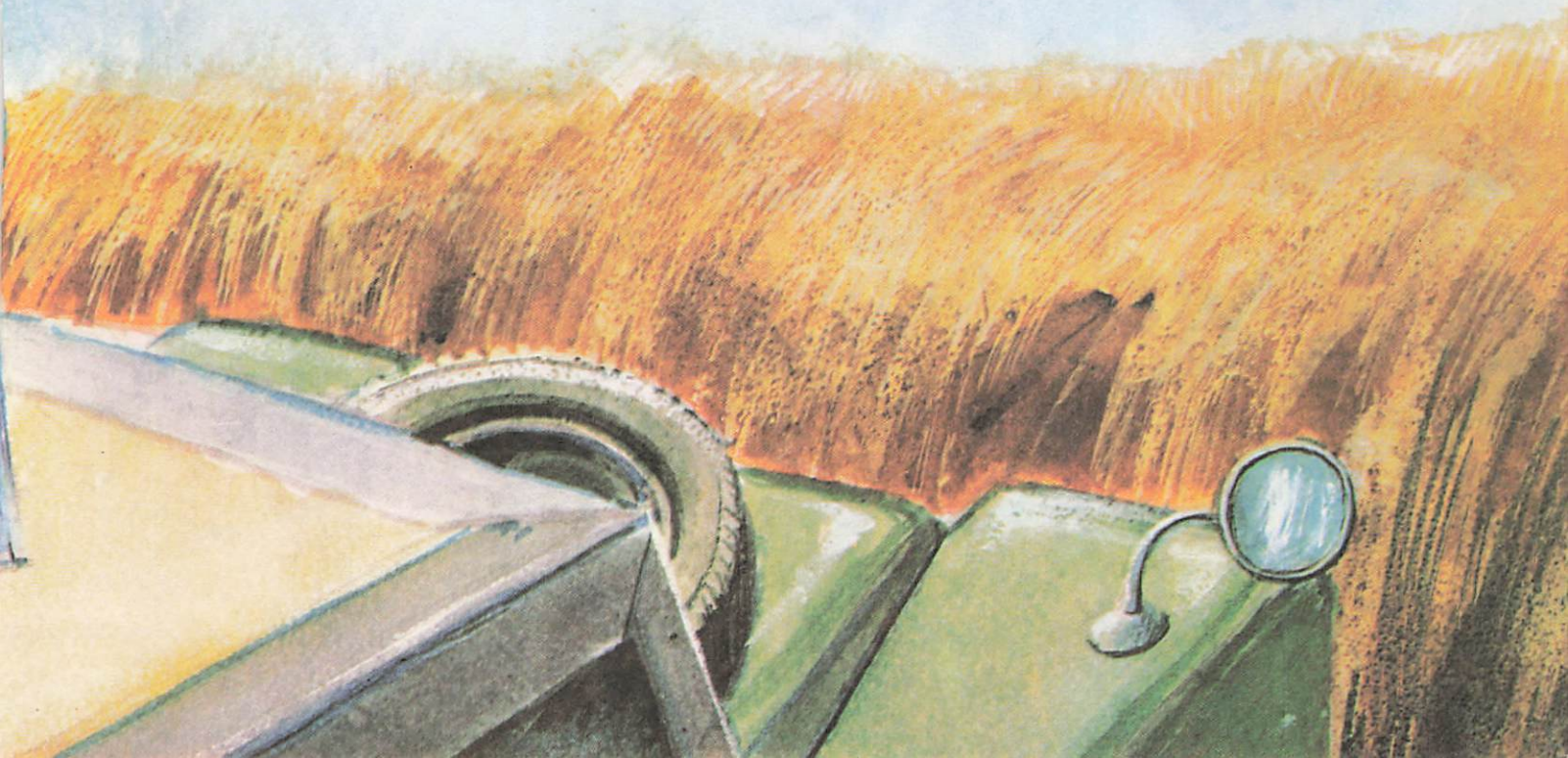
"He dropped my bootlace over the side of the mountain."

"He's got your sock now!" said Pete.

Charlie flew on to the roof of the Landrover with Jim's sock. He ripped a hole and stuck his head through it.

"Kee-ah!" he screamed.

"How can we catch him?" said Pete.





"This will catch that cheeky kea," said Jim.
He put some chocolate in the trap and took
a string back to the hut.

"Here he comes," said Pete.

Charlie flew down. He hopped and waddled to the trap.
He saw the chocolate and jumped in sideways.

Crash!

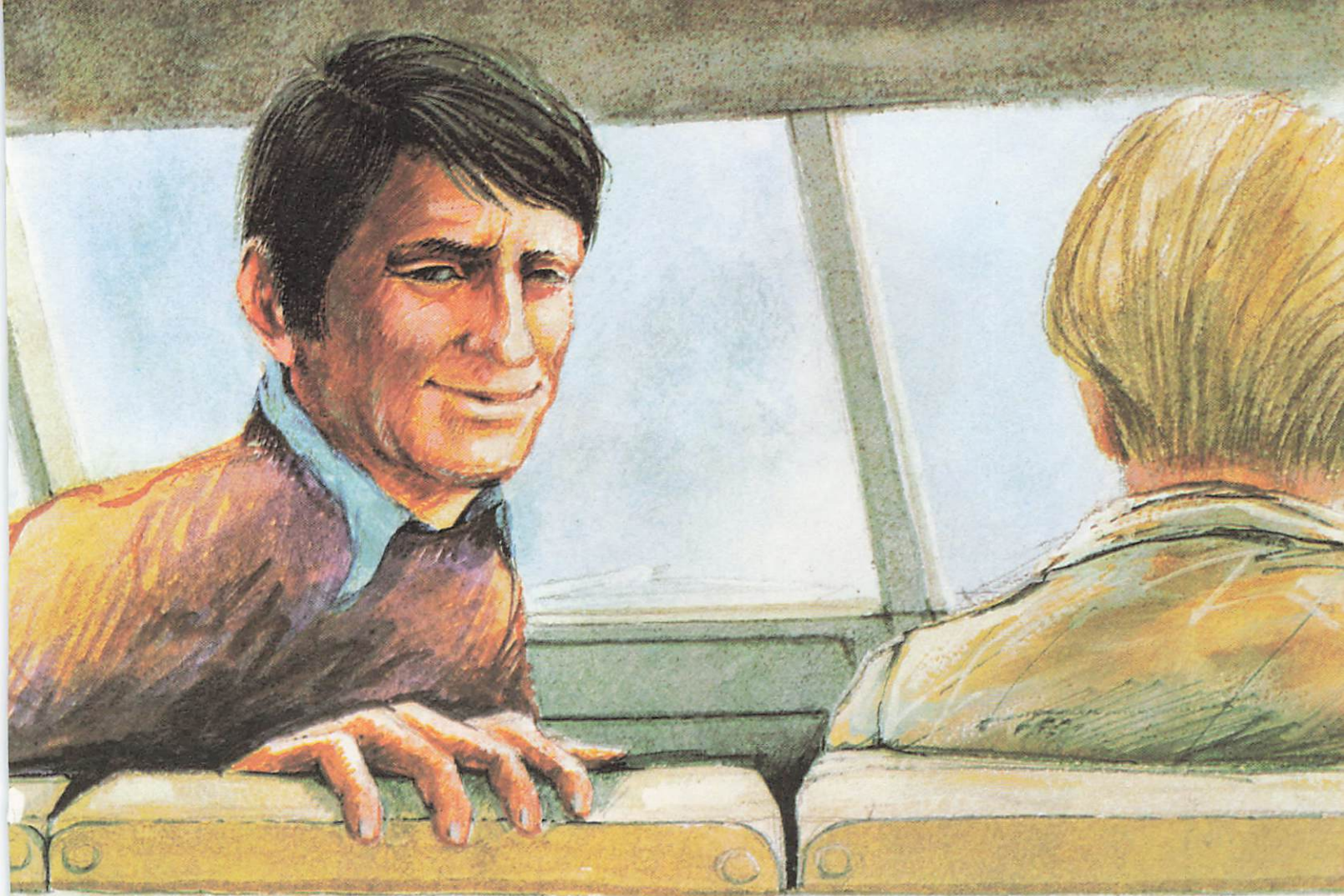
"Kee-ah! Kee-ah!"

Charlie was caught. Pete and Jim took him out
and put him in a sack. They left his head sticking out.







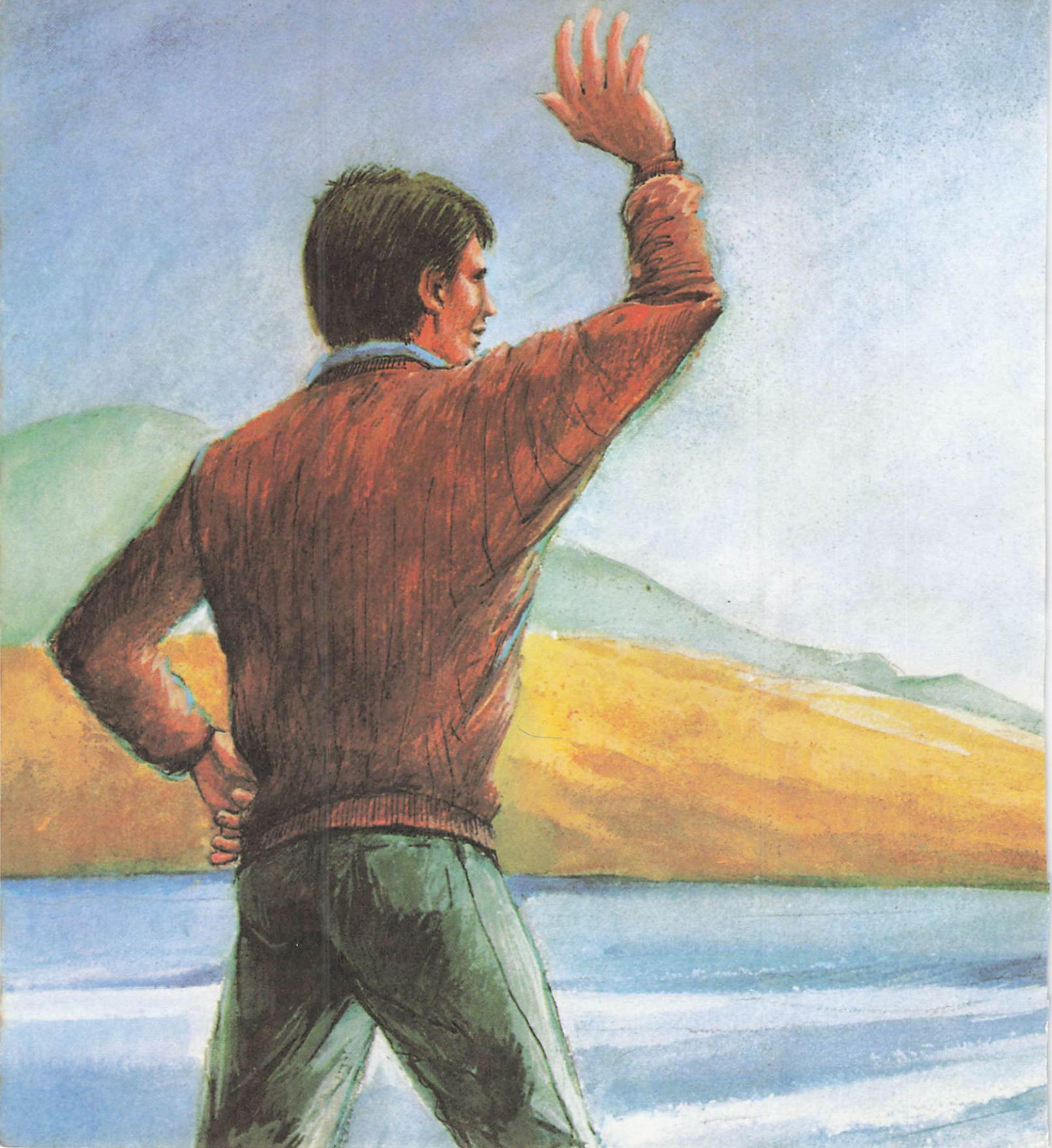


Jim drove down the steep track. Charlie was pecking at his own reflection in the window.

“Go on,” said Jim. “You can’t rip that with your big nosey beak.”

“Awk!” said Charlie.

“You’re going to the Wellington zoo,” Jim said. “You won’t rip my tent again!”



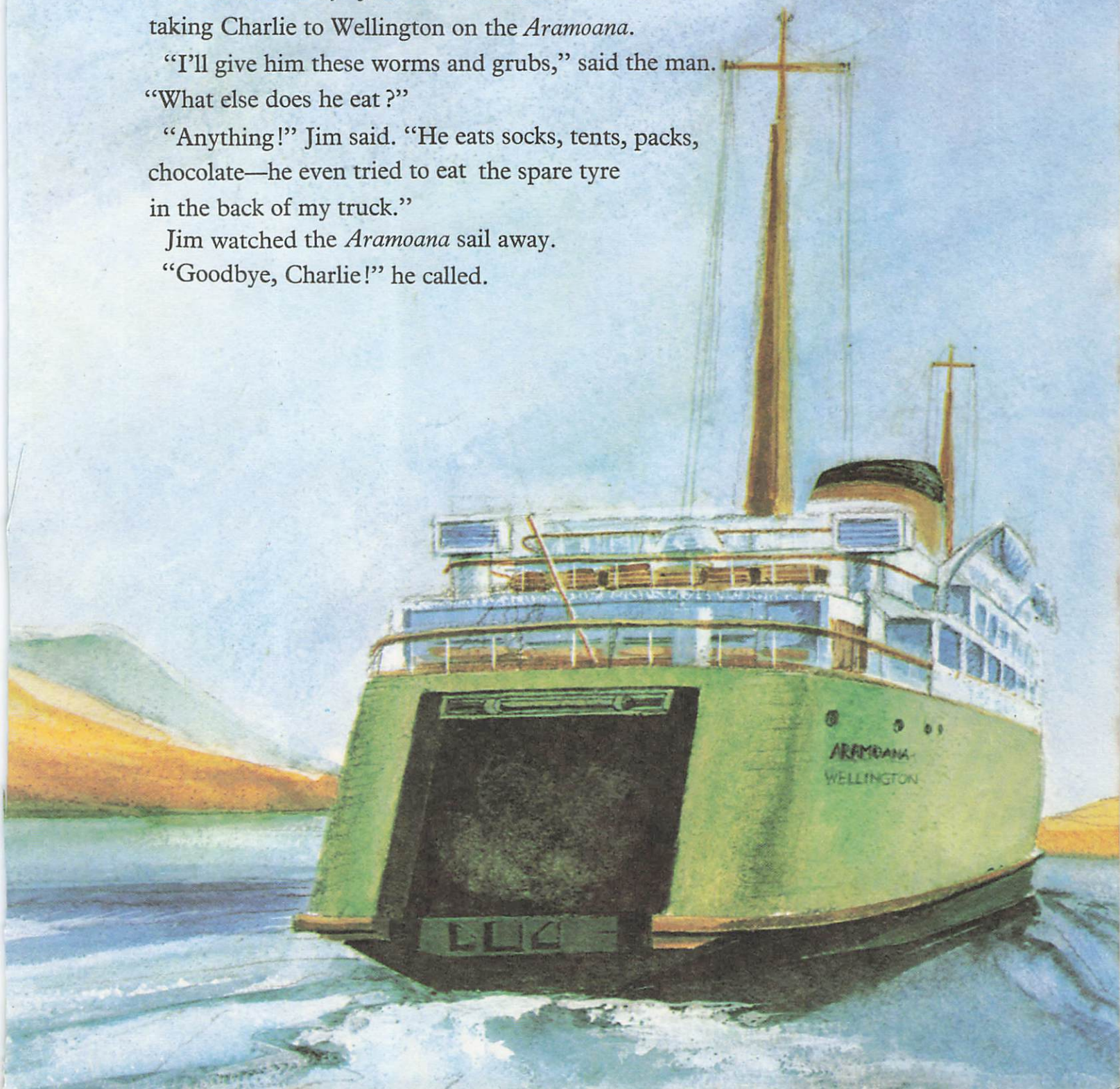
“Look after him,” Jim said to the man who was taking Charlie to Wellington on the *Aramoana*.

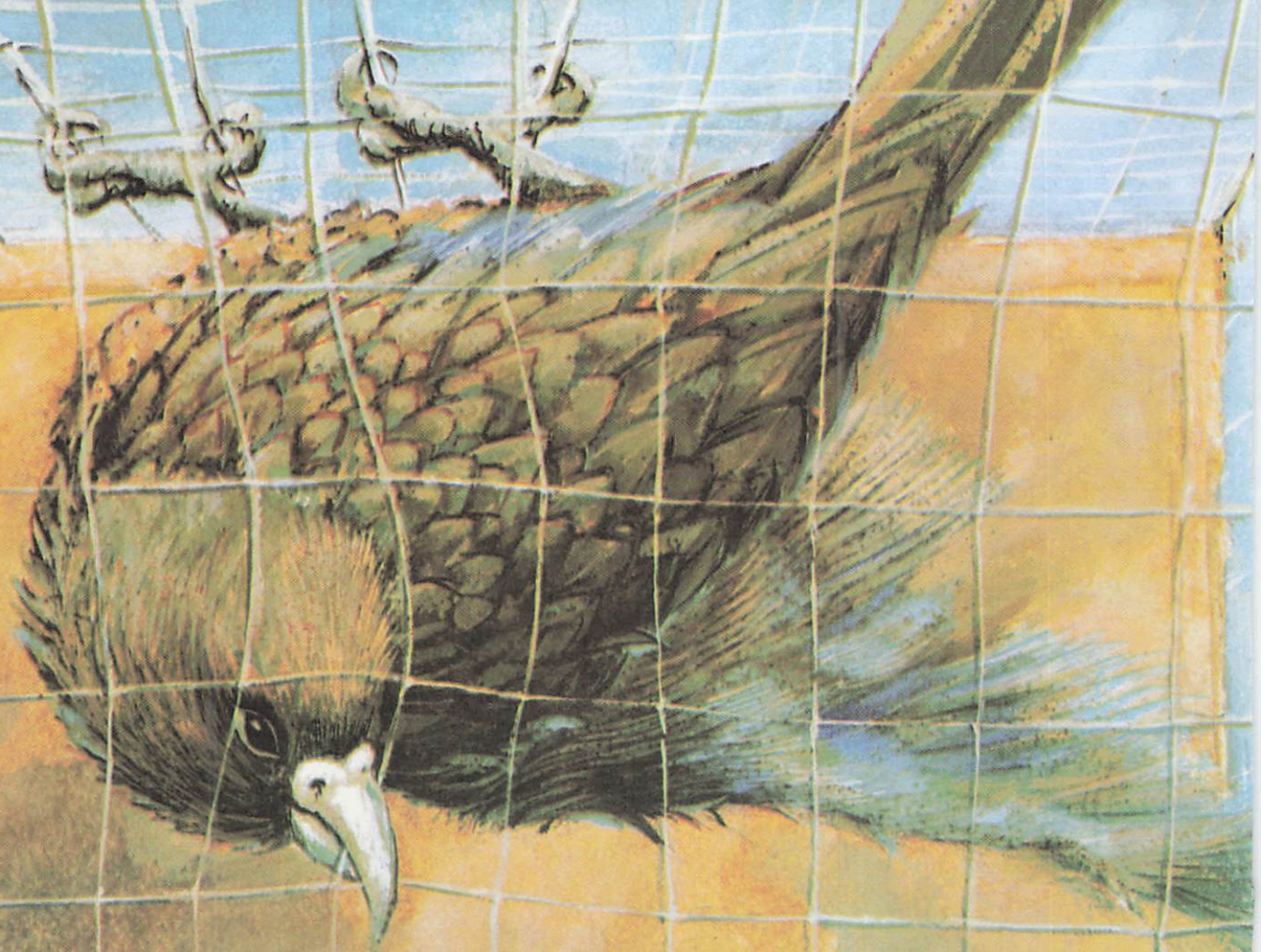
“I’ll give him these worms and grubs,” said the man. “What else does he eat?”

“Anything!” Jim said. “He eats socks, tents, packs, chocolate—he even tried to eat the spare tyre in the back of my truck.”

Jim watched the *Aramoana* sail away.

“Goodbye, Charlie!” he called.





CHARLIE THE CHEEKY KEA

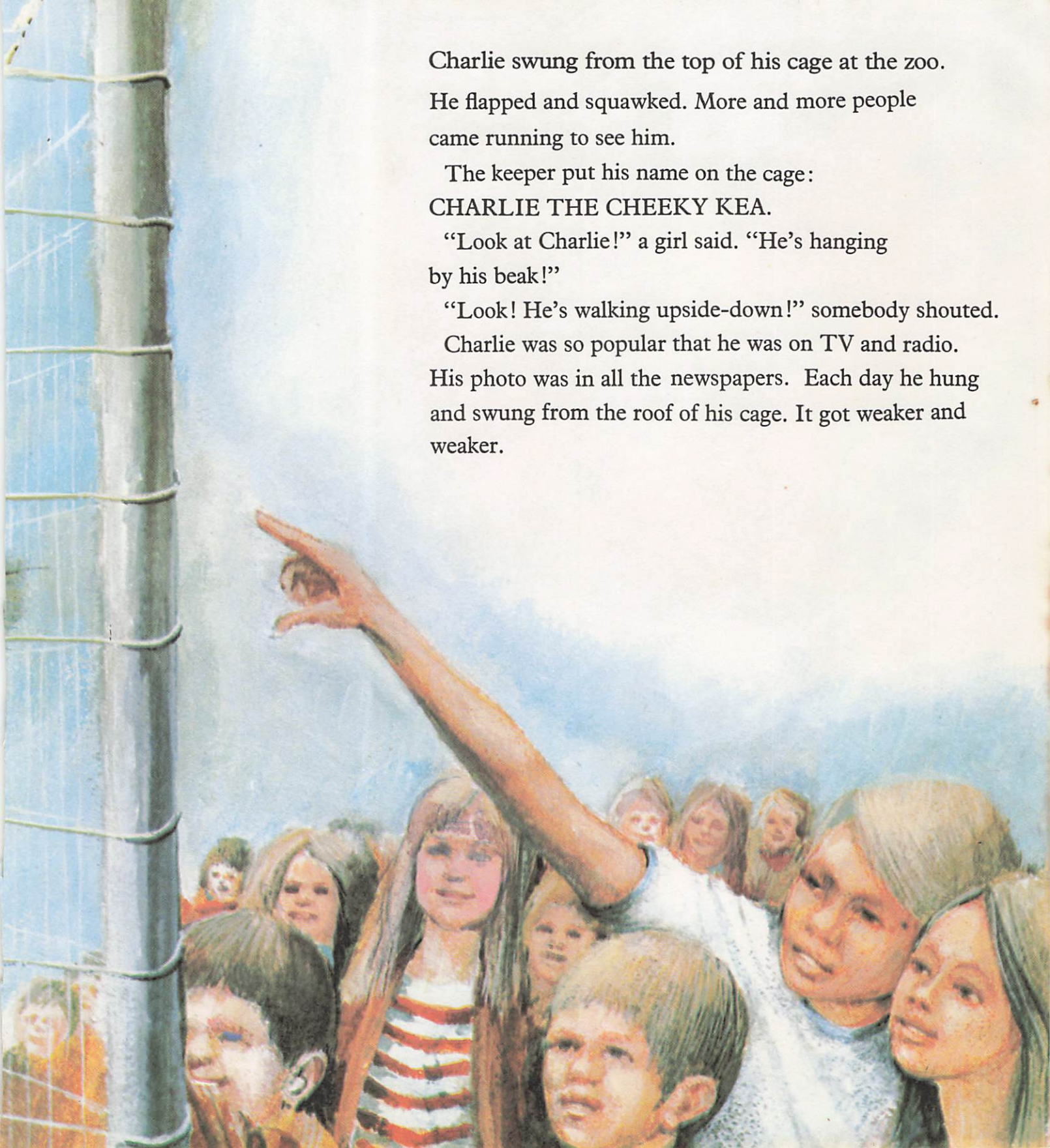
Charlie swung from the top of his cage at the zoo.
He flapped and squawked. More and more people
came running to see him.

The keeper put his name on the cage:
CHARLIE THE CHEEKY KEA.

“Look at Charlie!” a girl said. “He’s hanging
by his beak!”

“Look! He’s walking upside-down!” somebody shouted.

Charlie was so popular that he was on TV and radio.
His photo was in all the newspapers. Each day he hung
and swung from the roof of his cage. It got weaker and
weaker.





One day, Charlie stole the keeper's hat.

"Give that back," said the keeper, and he poked at Charlie with his broom.

"Don't hurt Charlie!" everybody cried.

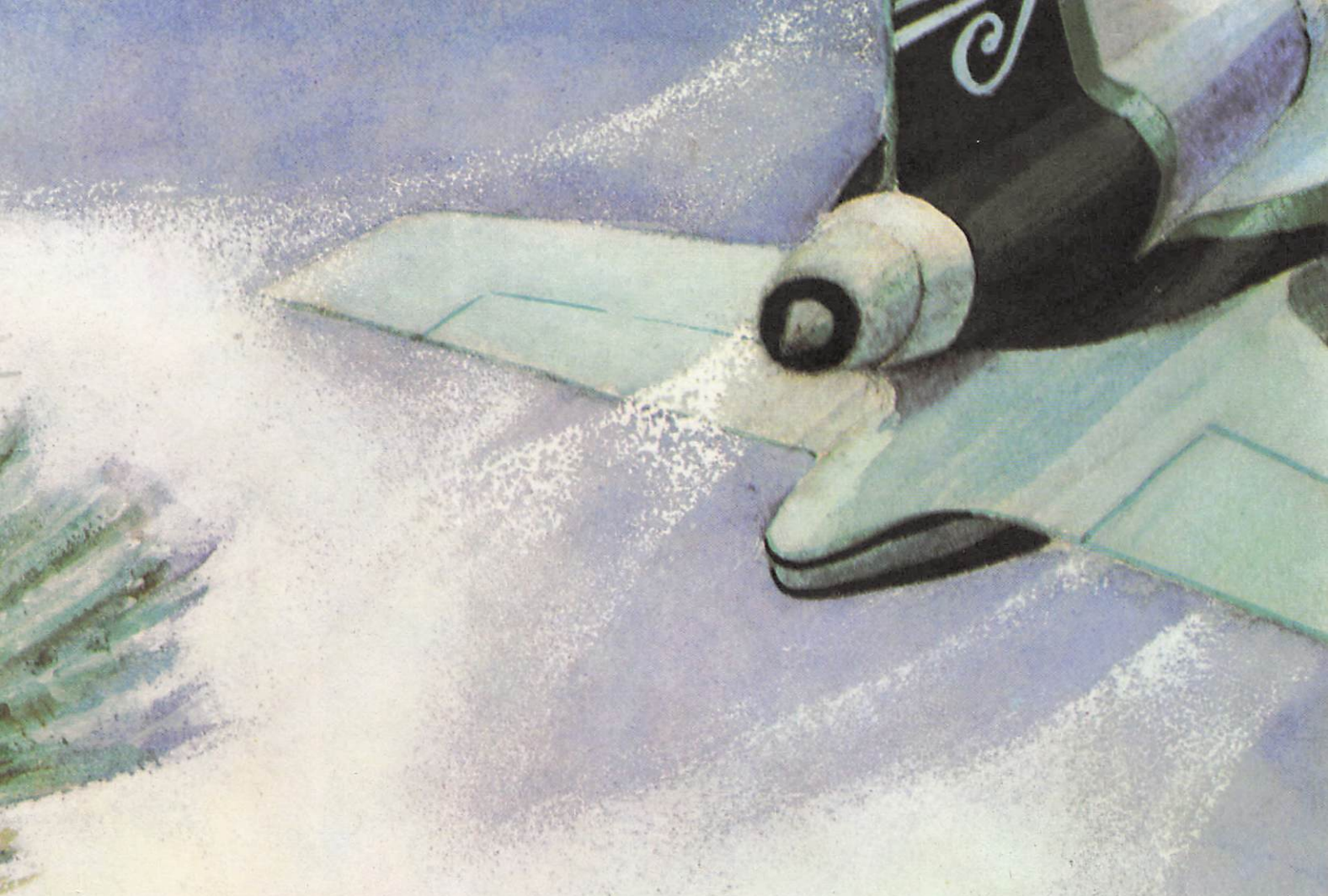
But the broom handle missed Charlie. It missed him but it made a big hole in the roof. Charlie climbed through it.

"Come back!" the keeper screamed. "Come down here!"

But only his hat came down. Charlie flew away. The keeper shook his fist, but the children cried.







As Charlie flew higher, Wellington spread out below him. Far away, he could see his mountains.

Charlie flew towards the mountains across the sea. There was a huge roar. A jet shot past Charlie. The wind it made blew his feathers backwards. They stuck out in all directions.

Charlie went up and down and round and down and over and down and upside-down, down towards the cold waves of Cook Strait.

Charlie tried to keep in the air, but he was tired. The jet had blown out some of his feathers, and he wasn't used to flying. He'd been shut up in his cage for weeks.

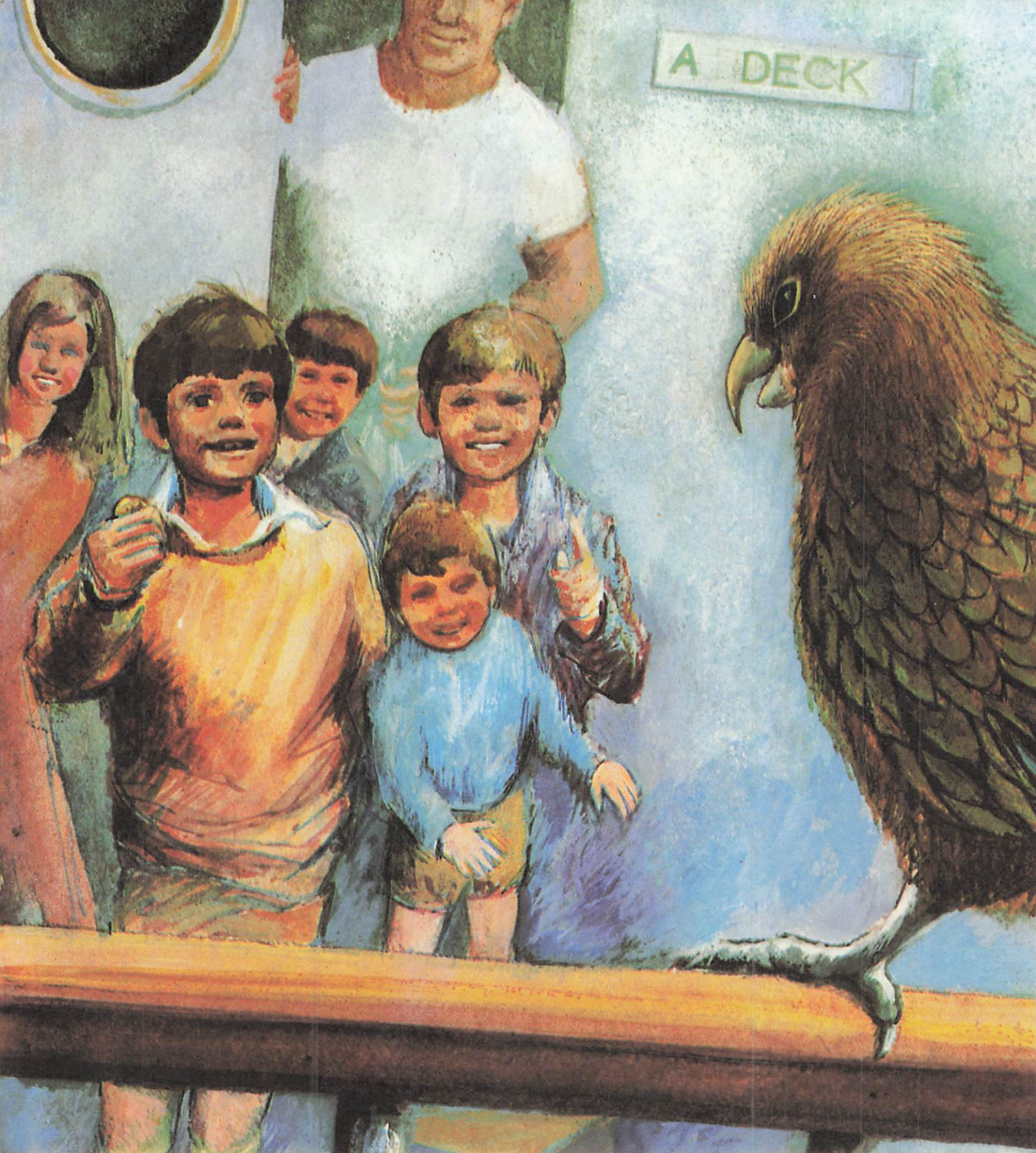
Charlie would have fallen into the sea, but he saw a ship. He just managed to land on the deck.

"Look, Mum," a girl said. "A turkey!"





A DECK



Charlie had landed on the *Aramoana*. It was going across to the South Island. Everybody crowded round Charlie. They gave him icecream and peanuts and biscuits. They all knew who he was because he'd been on TV and the radio and in all the newspapers. Charlie gobbled up everything they gave him. He felt much better.

Then the captain saw him. "Catch him," he said. "We'll take him back to the zoo."

"No!" all the children cried.

"He's a stowaway," the captain said.

"He just wants to hitch a ride home," somebody said.

"Look out, Charlie!" the children called.





Charlie flew up on to a lifeboat. He swung on a rope and squawked at the captain.

“Stop that!” the captain said. “Catch him!” he ordered a sailor.

Charlie didn’t see the sailor. He was too busy jumping up and down and squawking for the children.





“Got you!” the sailor said as he grabbed at Charlie. But he missed him and fell into the lifeboat. Only his legs stuck out, waving in the air.

“Ho, ho, ho!” the captain laughed.

Charlie hopped up to the other end of the lifeboat. He had stolen the sailor’s cap off his head. He tore a hole in it and stuck his head through.

“Kee-ah!”

“Ho, ho, ho!” the captain laughed.





But Charlie dropped the sailor's cap on the deck. He swooped down and snapped the captain's hat off his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!" everybody laughed.

"Ho, ho, ho!" said the sailor. He picked up his cap and pointed at the captain. "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Get that cheeky kea off my ship," said the captain," and get me my hat."





But Charlie was already off the *Aramoana*. He could see the mountains again and he flew towards them.

The captain's hat came dropping down out of the sky.

"My best hat!" the captain cried as the *Aramoana* ran over it.

"Goodbye, Charlie!" the children called.

The captain stamped his foot, and the sailor stuck his finger through the hole in his cap. That blasted parrot!





Charlie flew on towards the mountains. As they grew higher, the bush turned to scrub and then to tussock grass.

Charlie could see deer in the bush and tussock.

The mountains got higher. Charlie could see chamois. Then, up among the snow and ice, he saw thar.

“Kee-ah!” he screamed.

And a hundred other keas screamed back, “Kee-ah! Kee-ah!”

Charlie flew on towards his own mountain.



Jim the ranger sat in his tent on the side of the mountain. It was raining, and there were no keas.

"I wish I hadn't sent Charlie away," said Jim. "I can't get any photos now, but the newspapers can!"

Rip! Rip! Jim looked up. Charlie's bright eye looked at him through a hole in the roof.

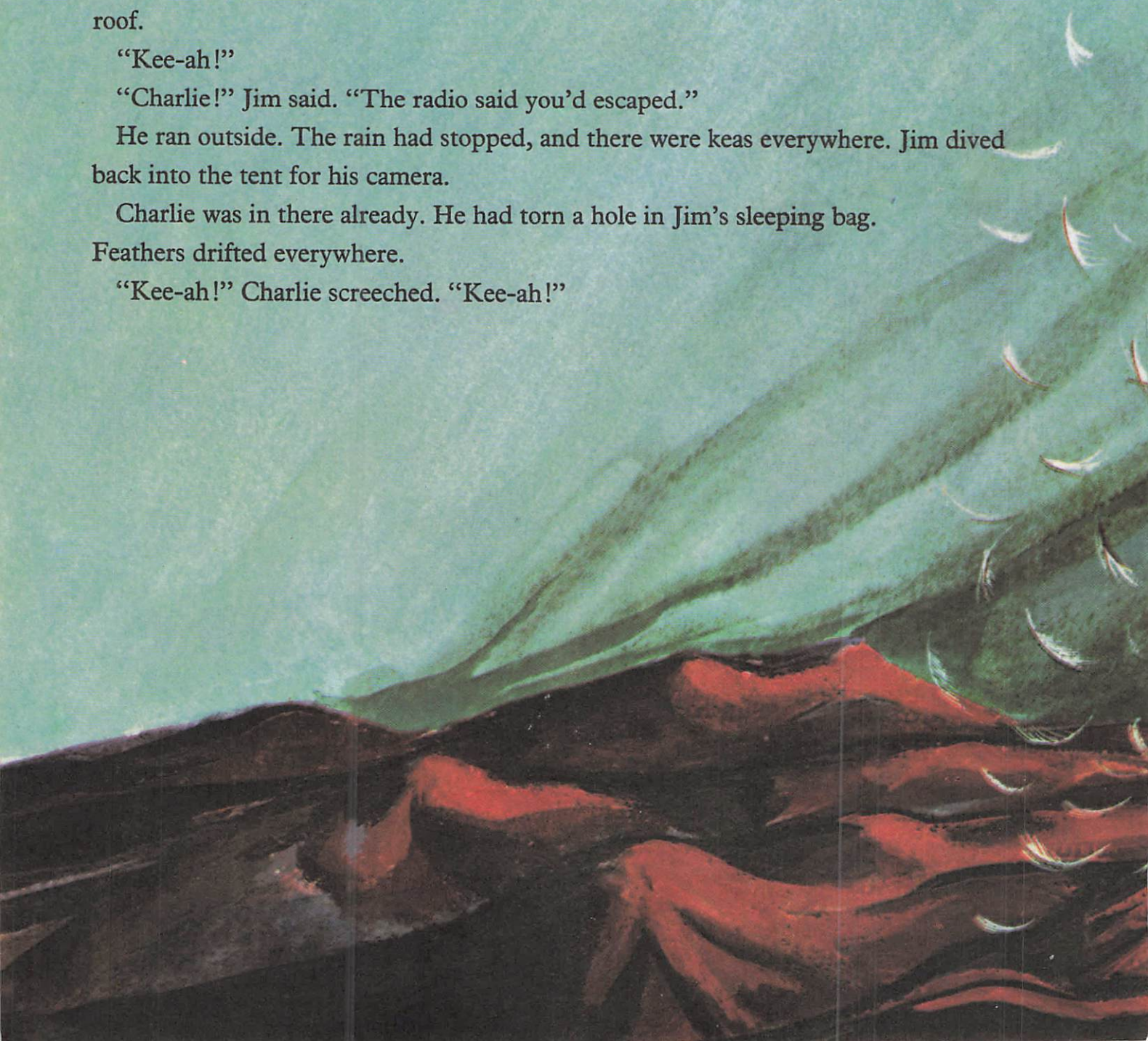
"Kee-ah!"

"Charlie!" Jim said. "The radio said you'd escaped."

He ran outside. The rain had stopped, and there were keas everywhere. Jim dived back into the tent for his camera.

Charlie was in there already. He had torn a hole in Jim's sleeping bag. Feathers drifted everywhere.

"Kee-ah!" Charlie screeched. "Kee-ah!"







Brushtail

the rock wallaby

Written by Diana Petersen

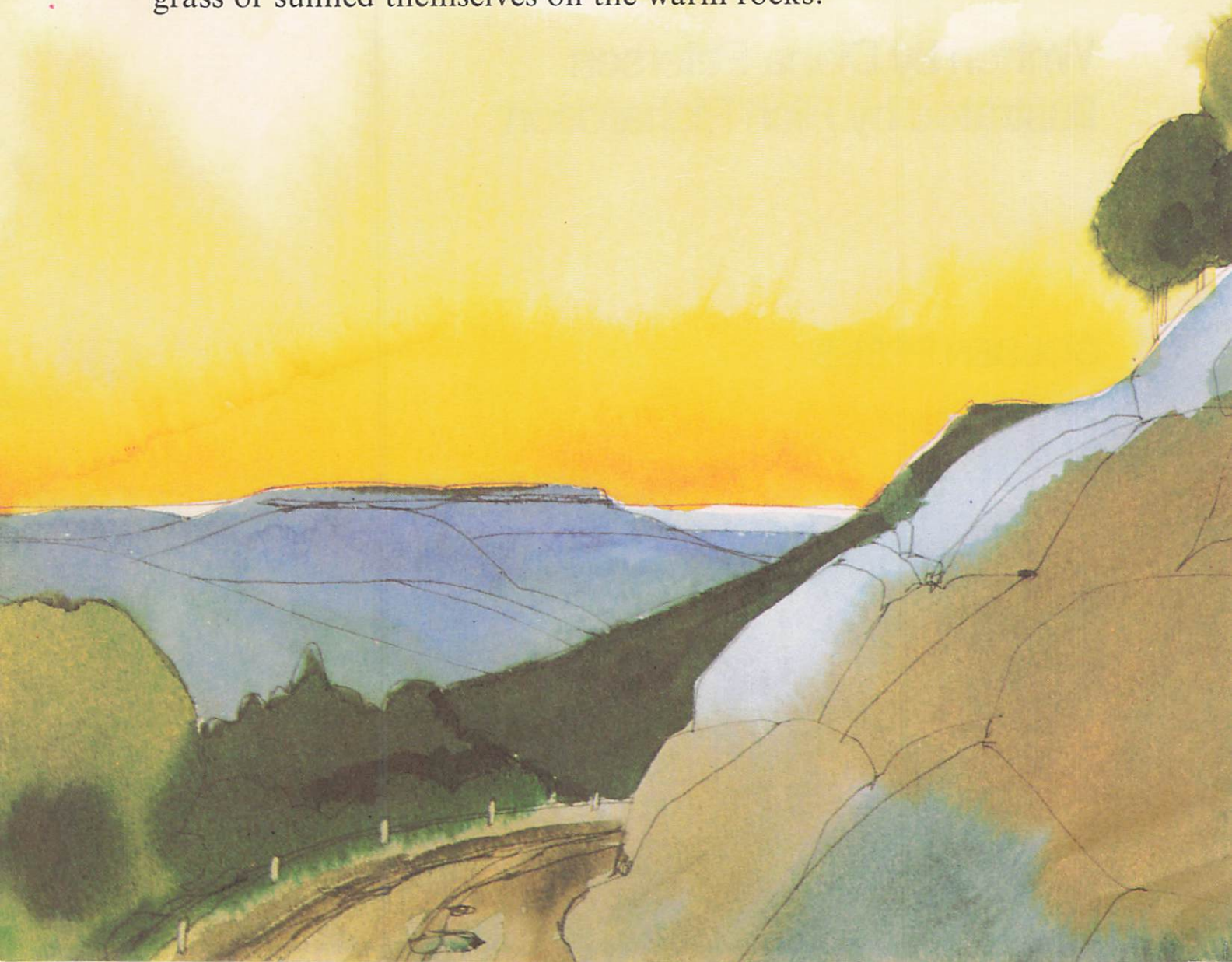
Illustrated by Rich Richardson

GOLDEN PRESS



Happily Brushtail nibbled at the green leaf he held in his paws. Down below the road was still wet from the heavy rain that had fallen all week. Now the clouds had blown away and the early morning sun shone on the ledge where the little rock wallaby sat.

Around him the other rock wallabies nibbled at the grass or sunned themselves on the warm rocks.





And at the end of the road where it came to a farm in the valley, someone else was very happy to see the sun shining.

‘Hurray!’ shouted Timmy. ‘It’s stopped raining at last! Now we can go to town today! Will we have lunch with Grandma when we’ve finished shopping?’

‘Yes,’ smiled his father.

‘And can we stop to watch if we see any rock wallabies on the way?’ he begged.

‘Don’t we always?’ laughed Dad.





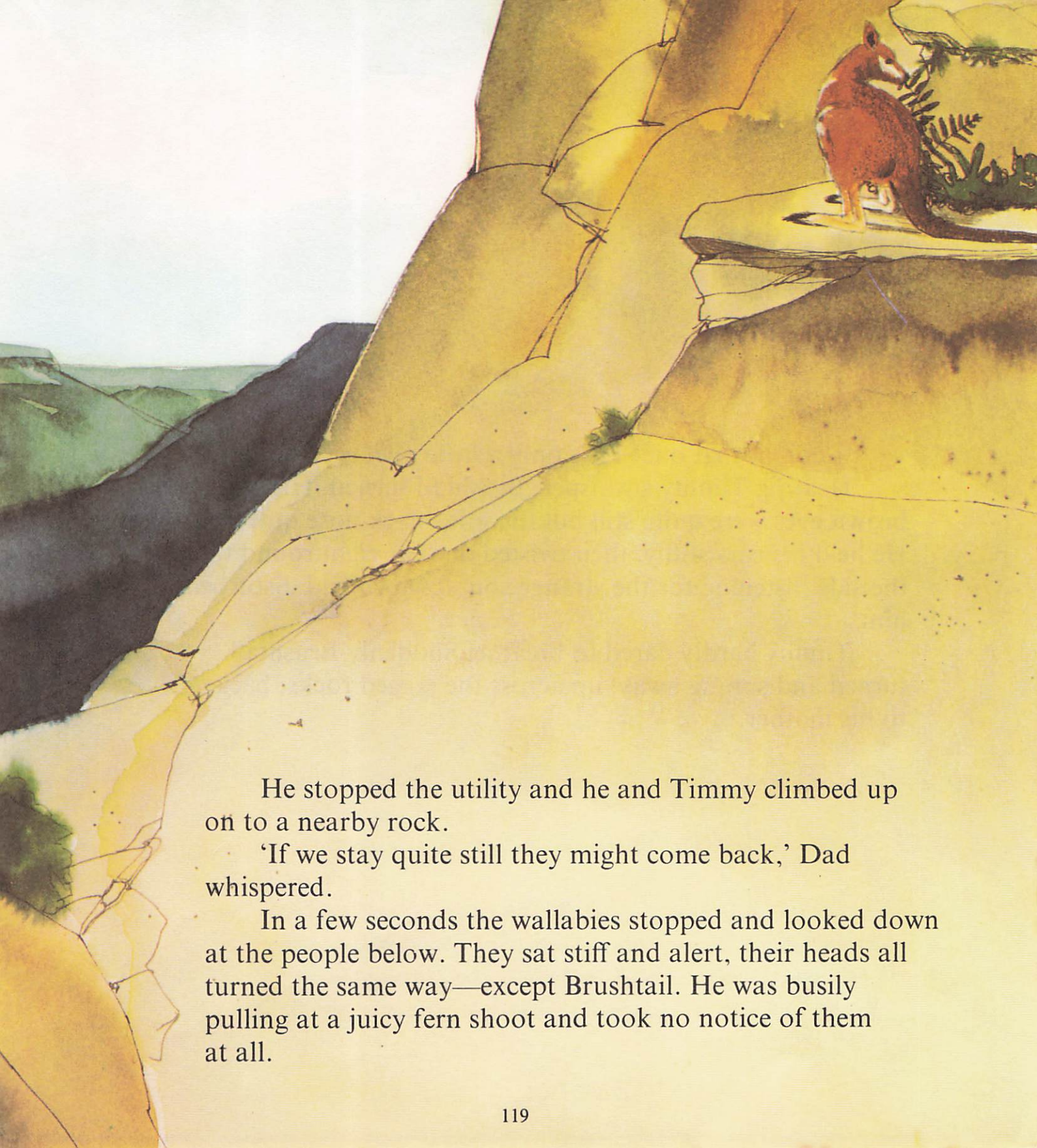
‘There they are!’ called Timmy as Dad’s utility slowed on the bend. When the wallabies heard the utility they were off. They bounded away up the side of the mountain with their tails curved upward and their paws held in close to their chests.

‘Don’t they ever fall?’ asked Timmy as he watched the sturdy little animals springing from rock to rock, up the almost sheer sides of the cliff.

‘They have special rough pads on the soles of their feet to stop them slipping, and their thick, bushy tails help them keep their balance,’ explained Dad.







He stopped the utility and he and Timmy climbed up on to a nearby rock.

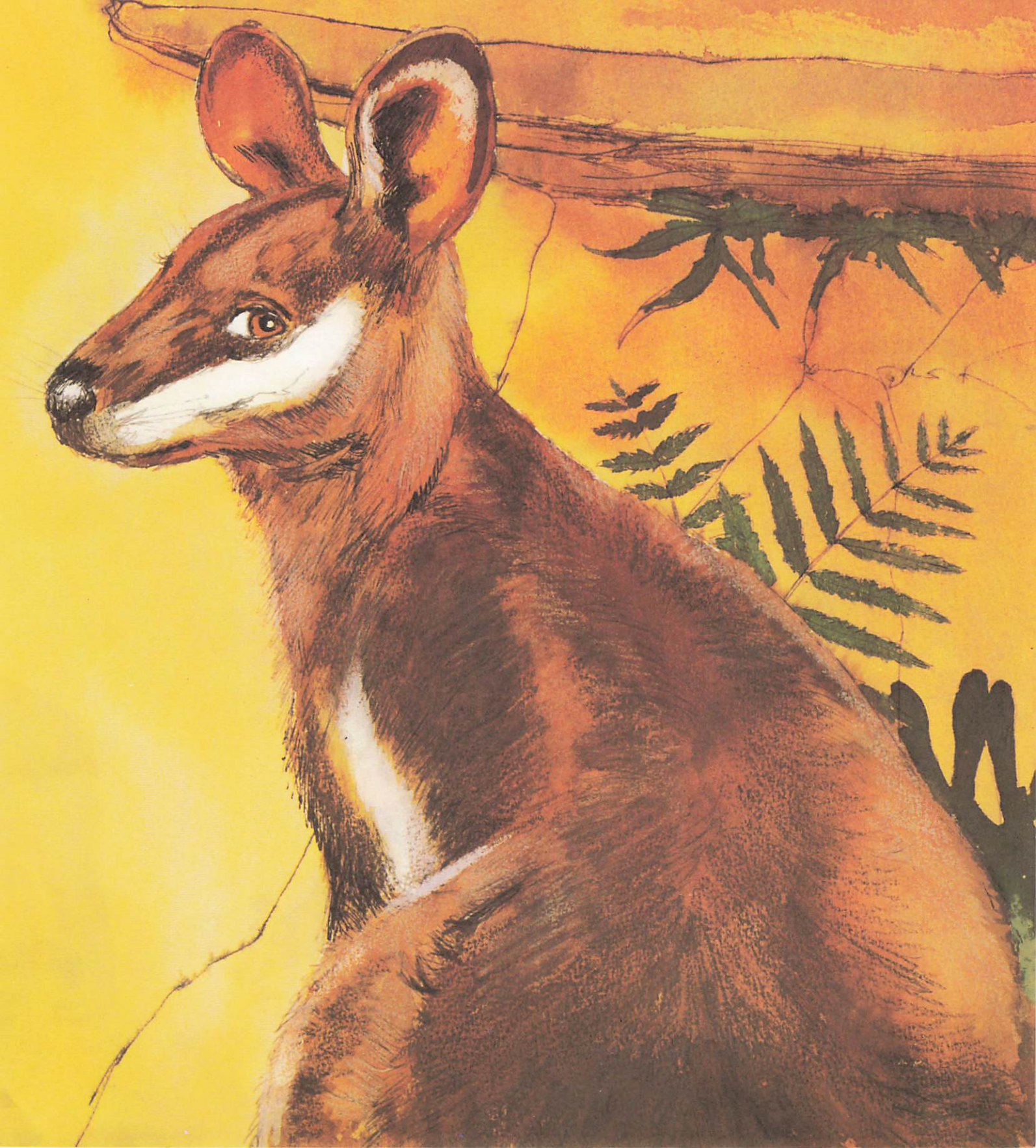
‘If we stay quite still they might come back,’ Dad whispered.

In a few seconds the wallabies stopped and looked down at the people below. They sat stiff and alert, their heads all turned the same way—except Brushtail. He was busily pulling at a juicy fern shoot and took no notice of them at all.

‘Look at that one! He’s only a little one, isn’t he Dad?’

Hearing Timmy’s whisper, Brushtail turned. His big, brown eyes were quite still but his soft, black nose quivered. He held his ears stiffly, then twisted one ear right round to the side, listening for the strange sound which had disturbed him.

Timmy hardly dared to breathe. Suddenly Brushtail turned and sprang away, up across the jagged rocks, back to his mother.



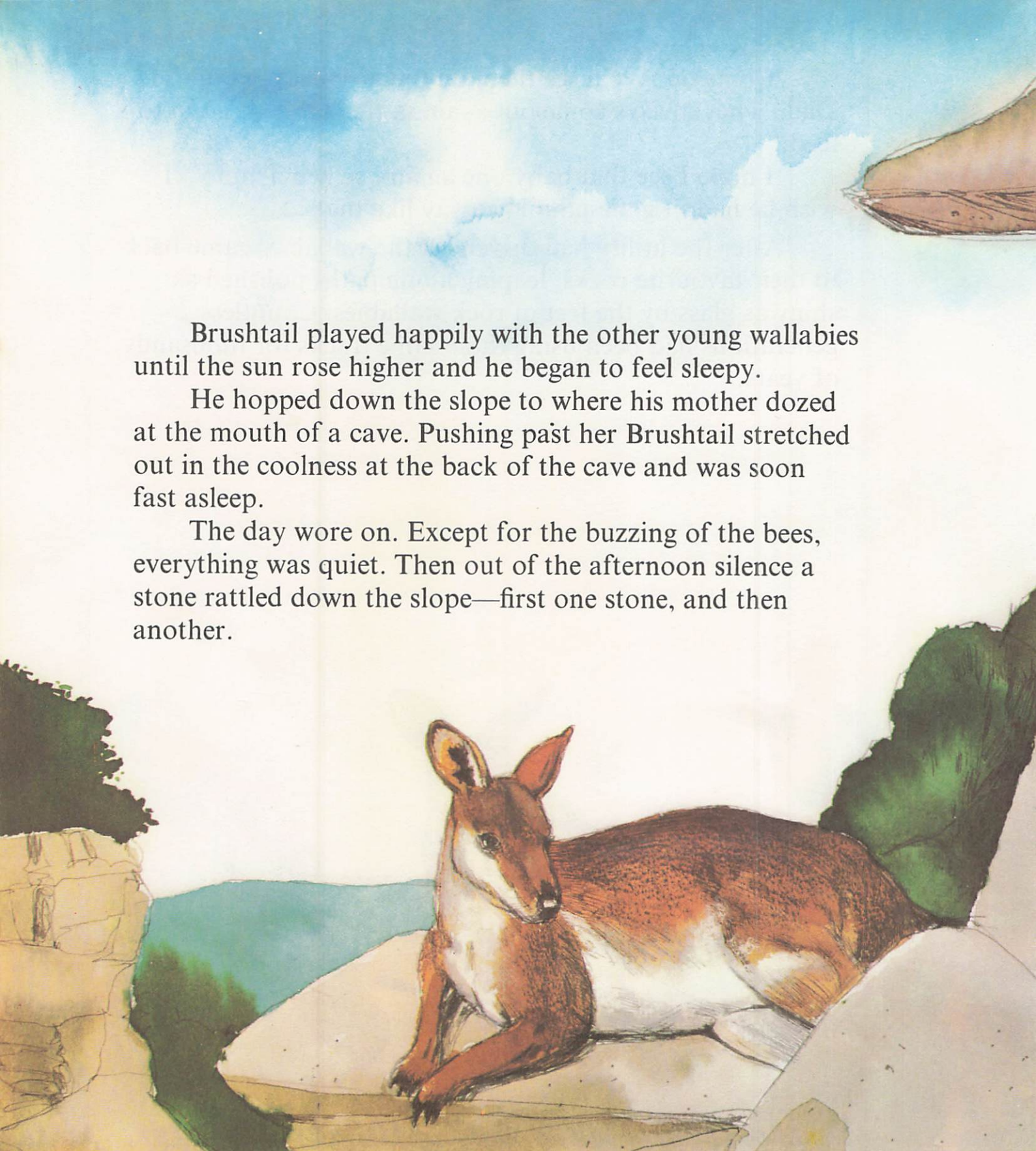


‘Come on. We’ll see them on the way back,’ promised Dad. ‘They always come out again in the late afternoon to feed.’

‘I hope I see that baby one again,’ sighed Timmy. ‘I wish he hadn’t gone jumping away like that.’

After the utility had driven off the wallabies came back to their favourite rocks, leaping along paths polished as shiny as glass by the feet of rock wallabies. Countless generations had been using these same tracks for thousands of years.





Brushtail played happily with the other young wallabies until the sun rose higher and he began to feel sleepy.

He hopped down the slope to where his mother dozed at the mouth of a cave. Pushing past her Brushtail stretched out in the coolness at the back of the cave and was soon fast asleep.

The day wore on. Except for the buzzing of the bees, everything was quiet. Then out of the afternoon silence a stone rattled down the slope—first one stone, and then another.



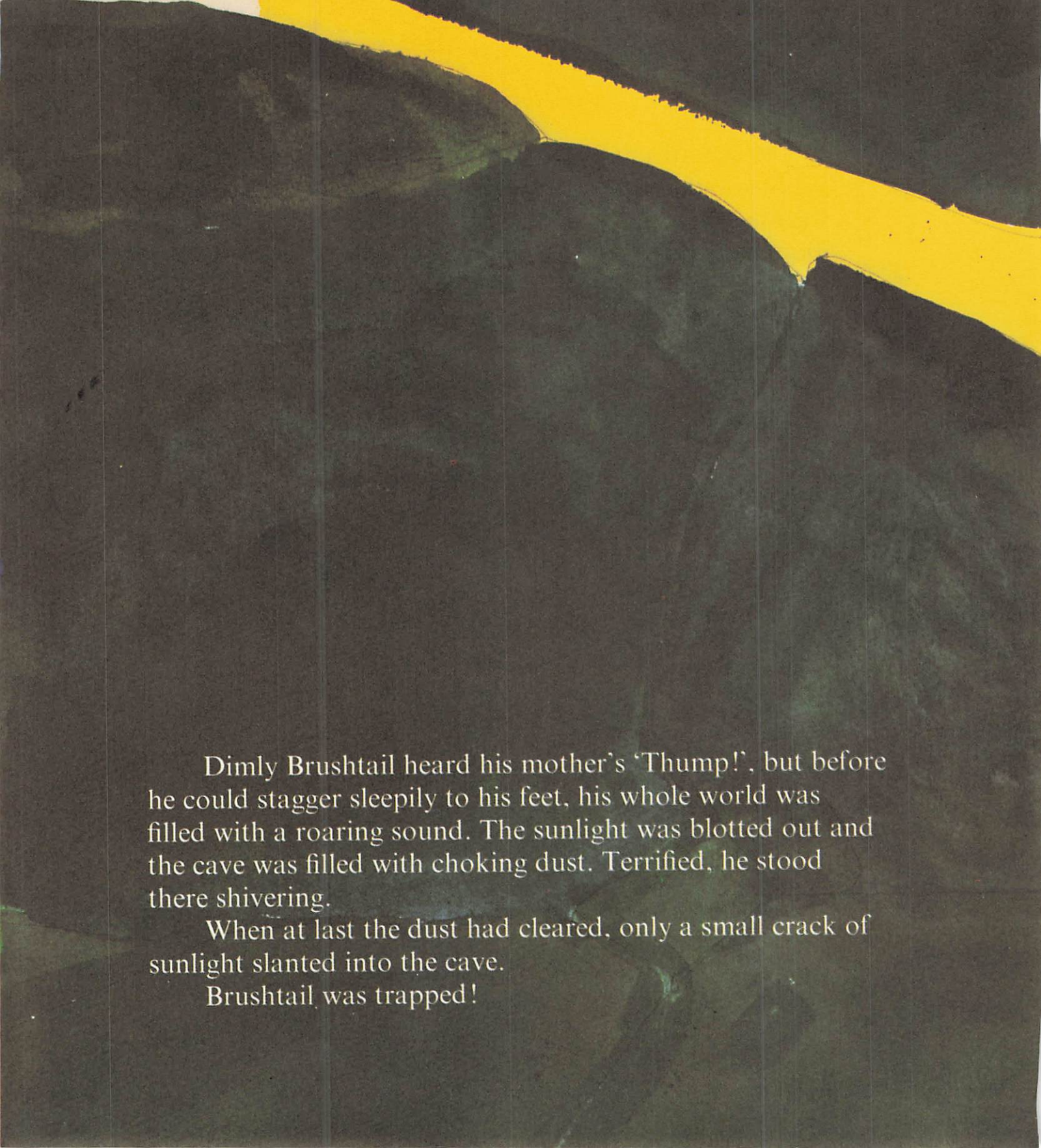


Brushtail's mother started to her feet as the first pebbles and stones clattered on to the ledge. She gave a warning 'Thump! Thump!' with her hind foot. Even as she did this a great shower of stone and rock came thundering down the side of the mountain.

With a mighty leap she was off the ledge—streaking after the other wallabies.

The heavy rain had loosened the earth above the road, and now, with a roar, it came crashing down.

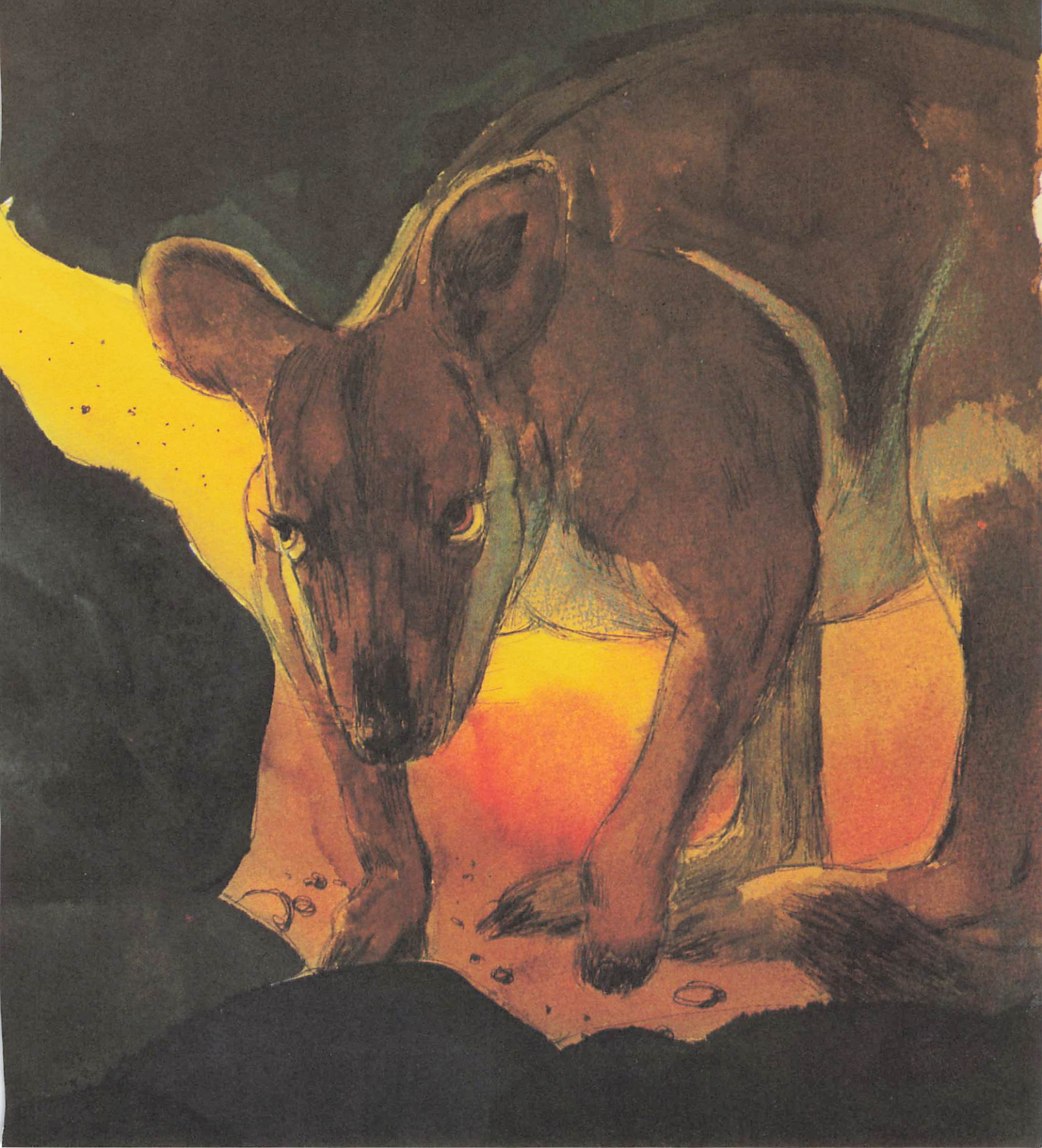




Dimly Brushtail heard his mother's 'Thump!', but before he could stagger sleepily to his feet, his whole world was filled with a roaring sound. The sunlight was blotted out and the cave was filled with choking dust. Terrified, he stood there shivering.

When at last the dust had cleared, only a small crack of sunlight slanted into the cave.

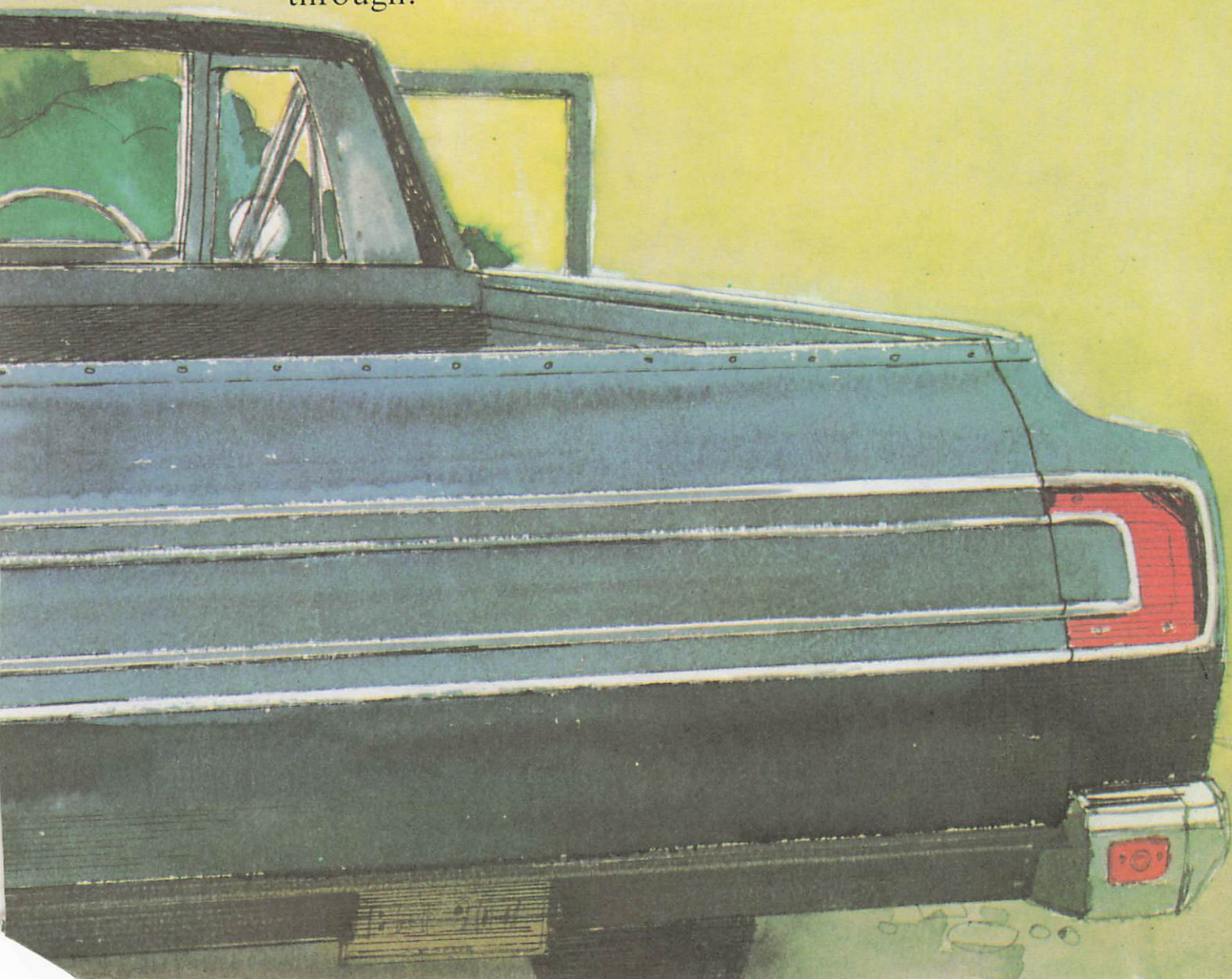
Brushtail was trapped!

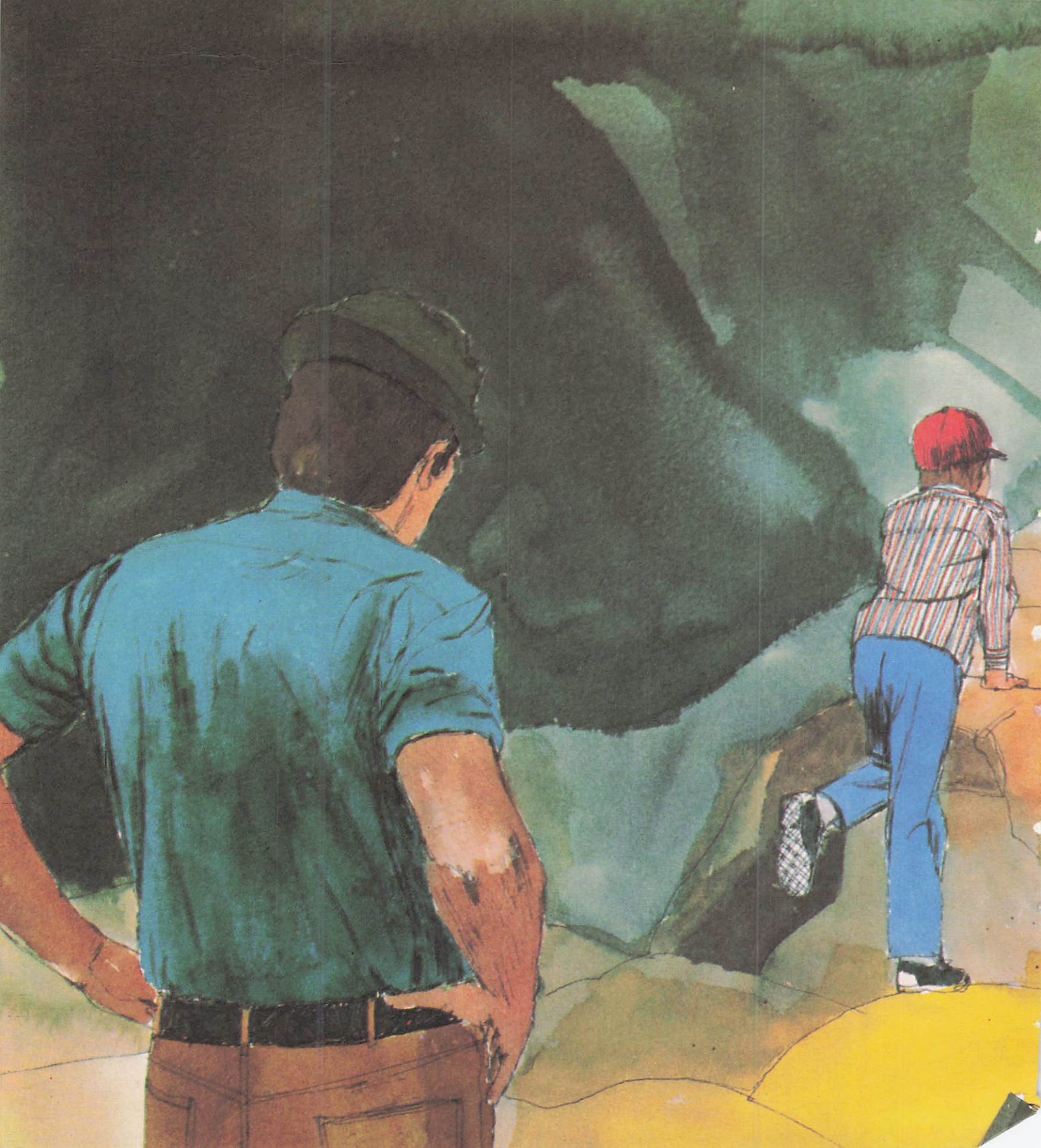


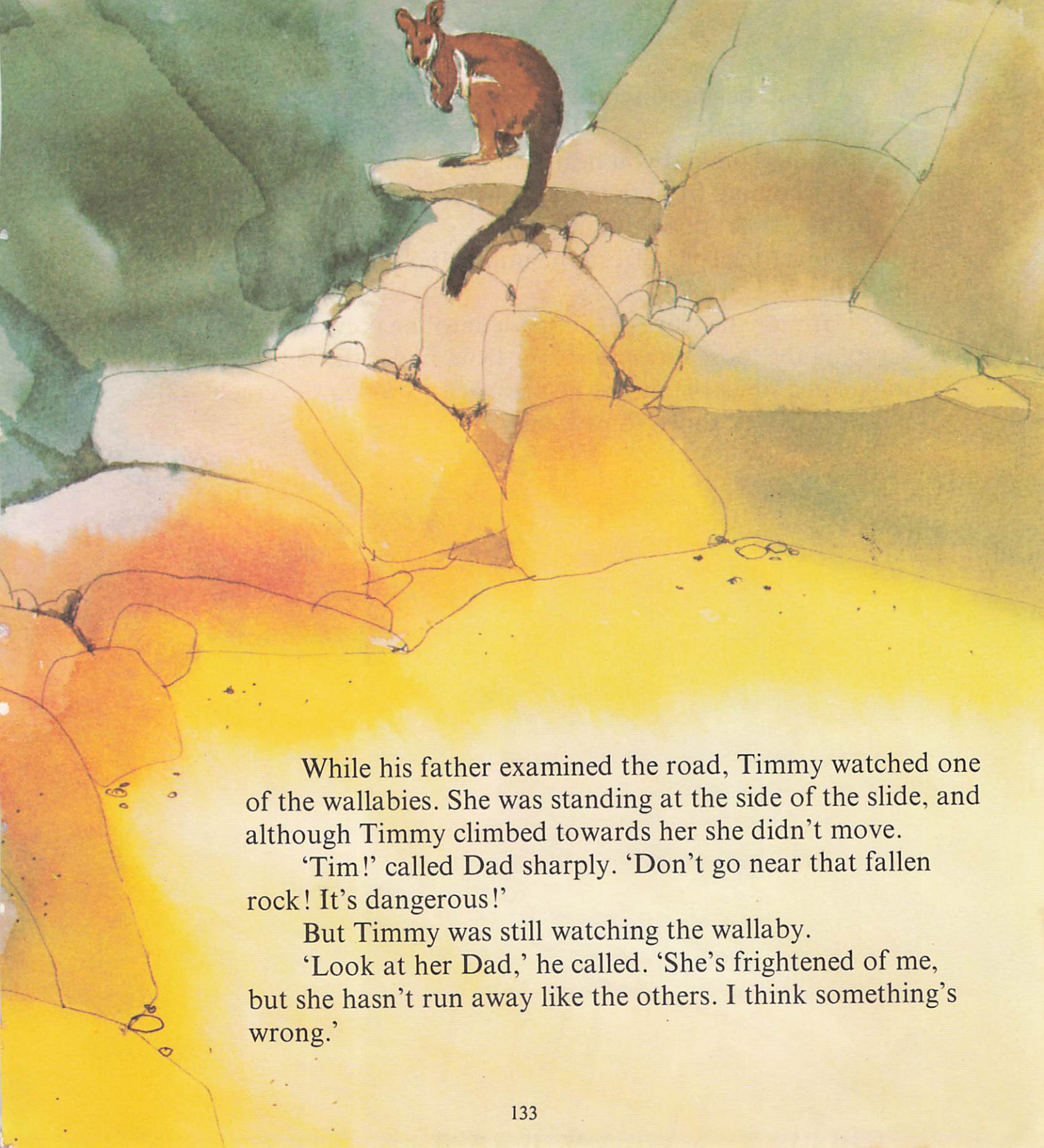


It was late afternoon when Dad drove around the bend.
'What's happened?' cried Timmy.

'It's a rockfall,' said Dad, slamming on the brakes. 'All that rain we've had must have loosened the earth up there, and quite a lot of it's come down. I don't think it's taken any of the road with it, but I'd better have a look. I'm afraid we'll need a bulldozer to clear the road before we can get through.'







While his father examined the road, Timmy watched one of the wallabies. She was standing at the side of the slide, and although Timmy climbed towards her she didn't move.

'Tim!' called Dad sharply. 'Don't go near that fallen rock! It's dangerous!'

But Timmy was still watching the wallaby.

'Look at her Dad,' he called. 'She's frightened of me, but she hasn't run away like the others. I think something's wrong.'

As Dad began to scramble up the slope he heard a scrabbling sound.

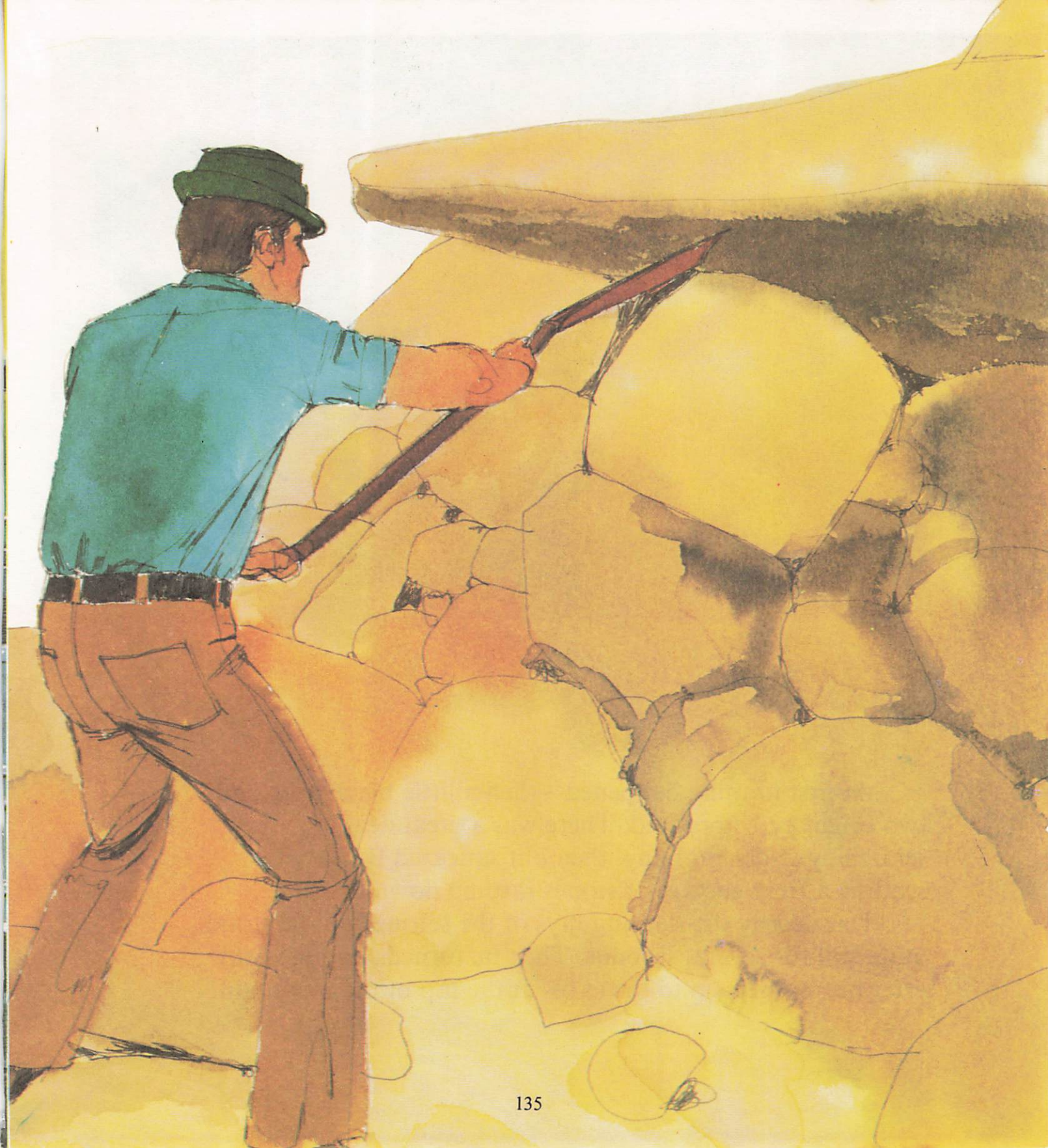
‘Shhh! Tim, did you hear that?’

‘It’s coming from that crack there,’ said Timmy excitedly. ‘What do you think it is?’

‘I’ll get the spade from the utility and we’ll see,’ said his father.

Carefully he worked the spade into the crevice, scraping the loose dirt and stones from under the ledge. It took some time, but at last he managed to widen the crack a little. He bent down to peer in.







At first nothing happened—then a little black nose and two bright eyes appeared. There was a great deal of scratching and scrabbling, then out squeezed Brushtail, sending a fresh shower of stones rattling down the slope.

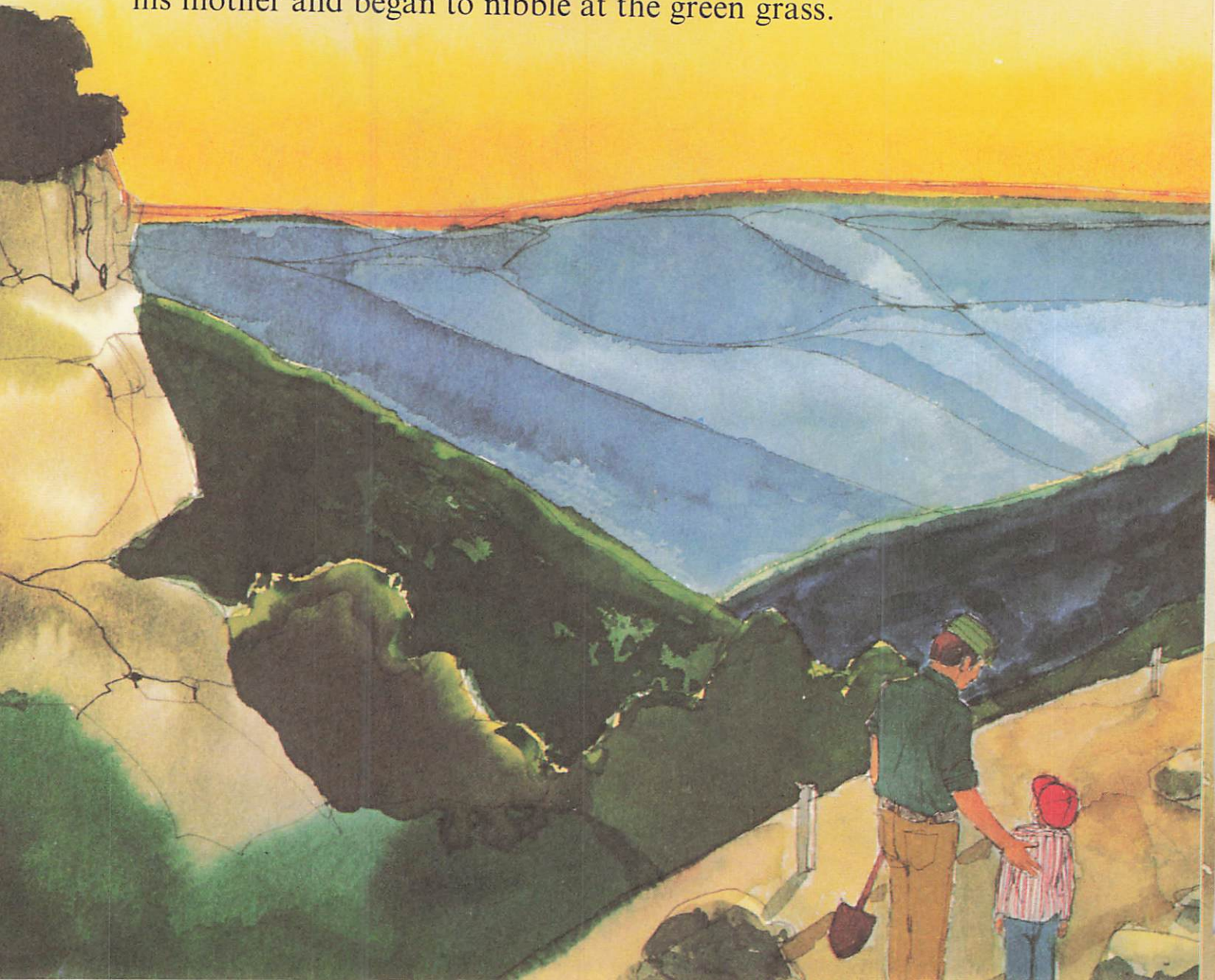
Dazzled by the slanting rays of the setting sun, he stood quite still for several seconds. Then he turned, leaping away after his mother, up to the caves at the top of the mountain.

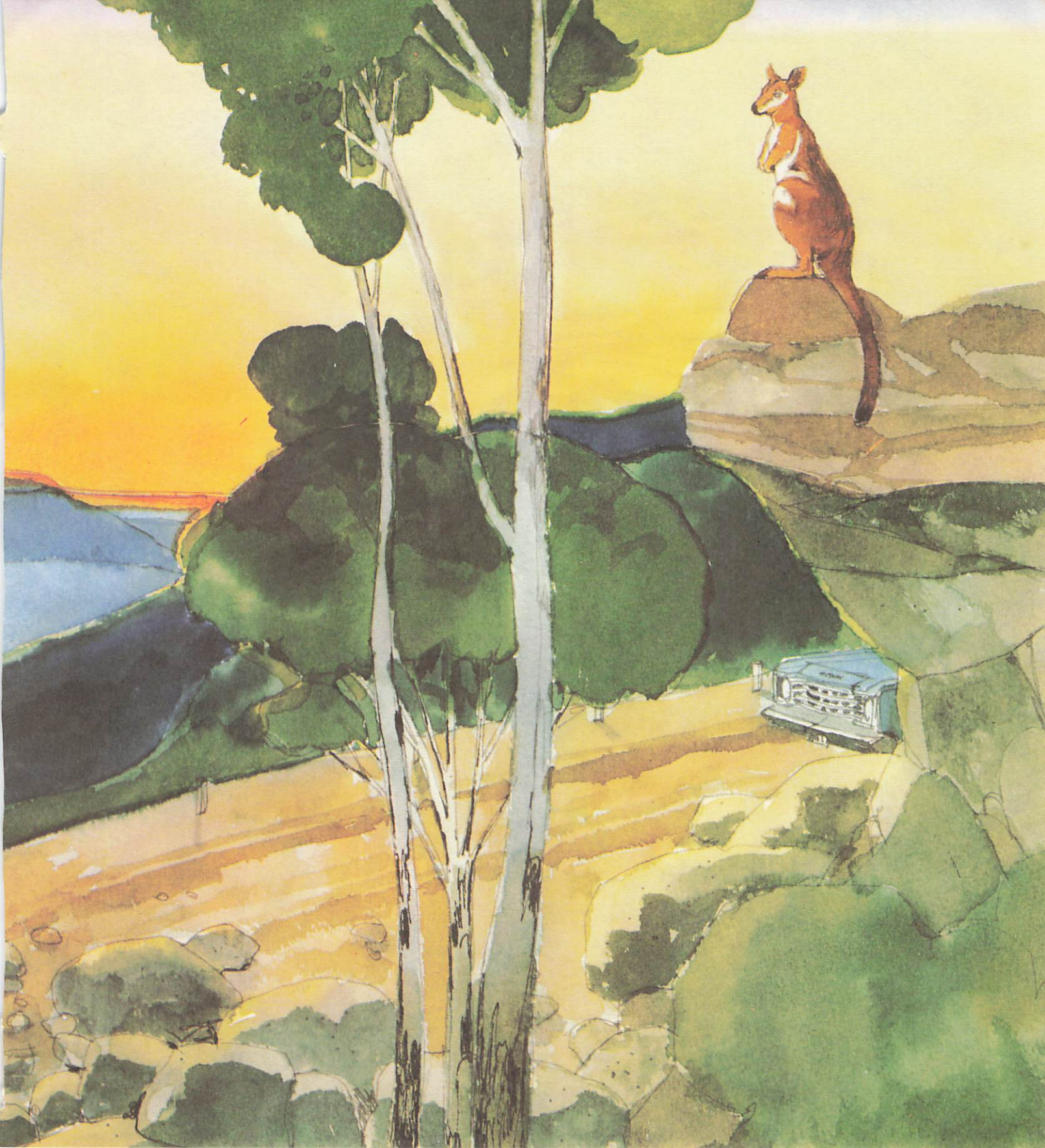


‘There, he’s safe now,’ smiled Dad. ‘Come on. We’ll go back to town for the night. The bulldozer will come out in the morning and clear the road.’

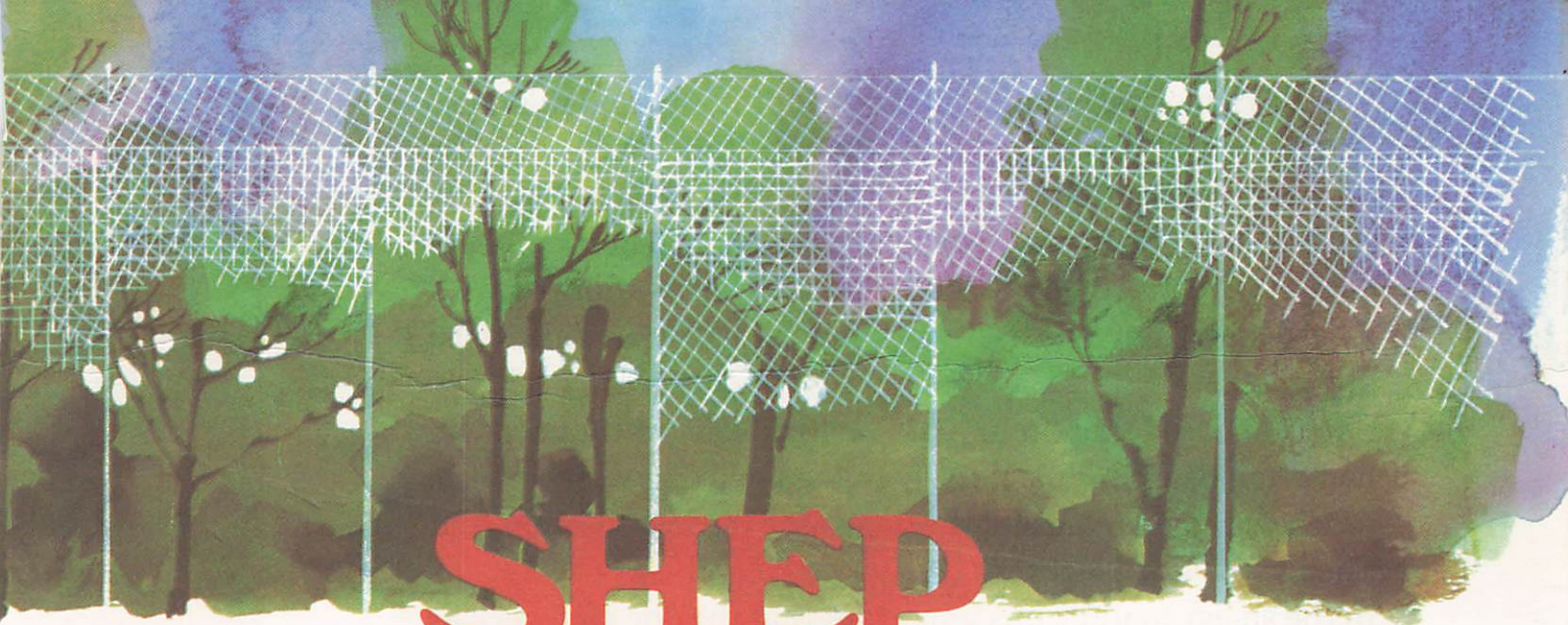
‘Perhaps I’ll see him again when we come back tomorrow,’ said Timmy, following his father back to the utility.

High above the road Brushtail watched until the utility had disappeared round the bend. Then he hopped across to his mother and began to nibble at the green grass.







An illustration at the top of the page shows a white chain-link fence running across the frame. Behind the fence are several trees with green foliage and some bare branches. The sky is a mix of blue and purple. The ground in front of the fence is a light, sandy color.

SHEP the sheep-dog

Written by Julia Graham
Illustrated by Tony Oliver



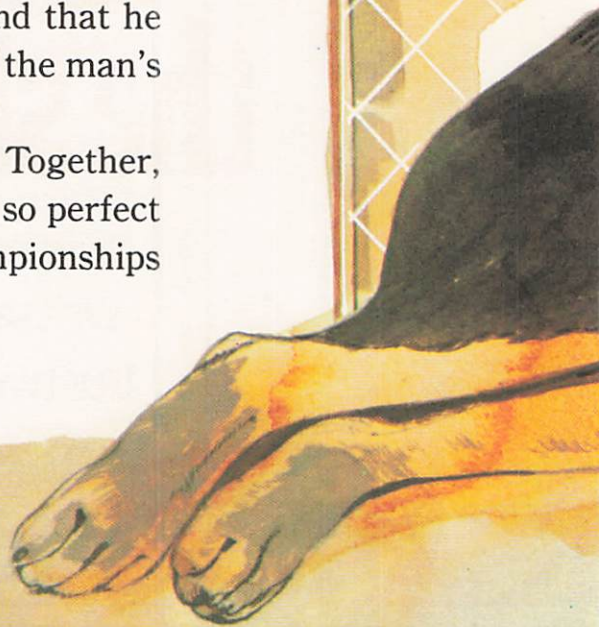
GOLDEN PRESS

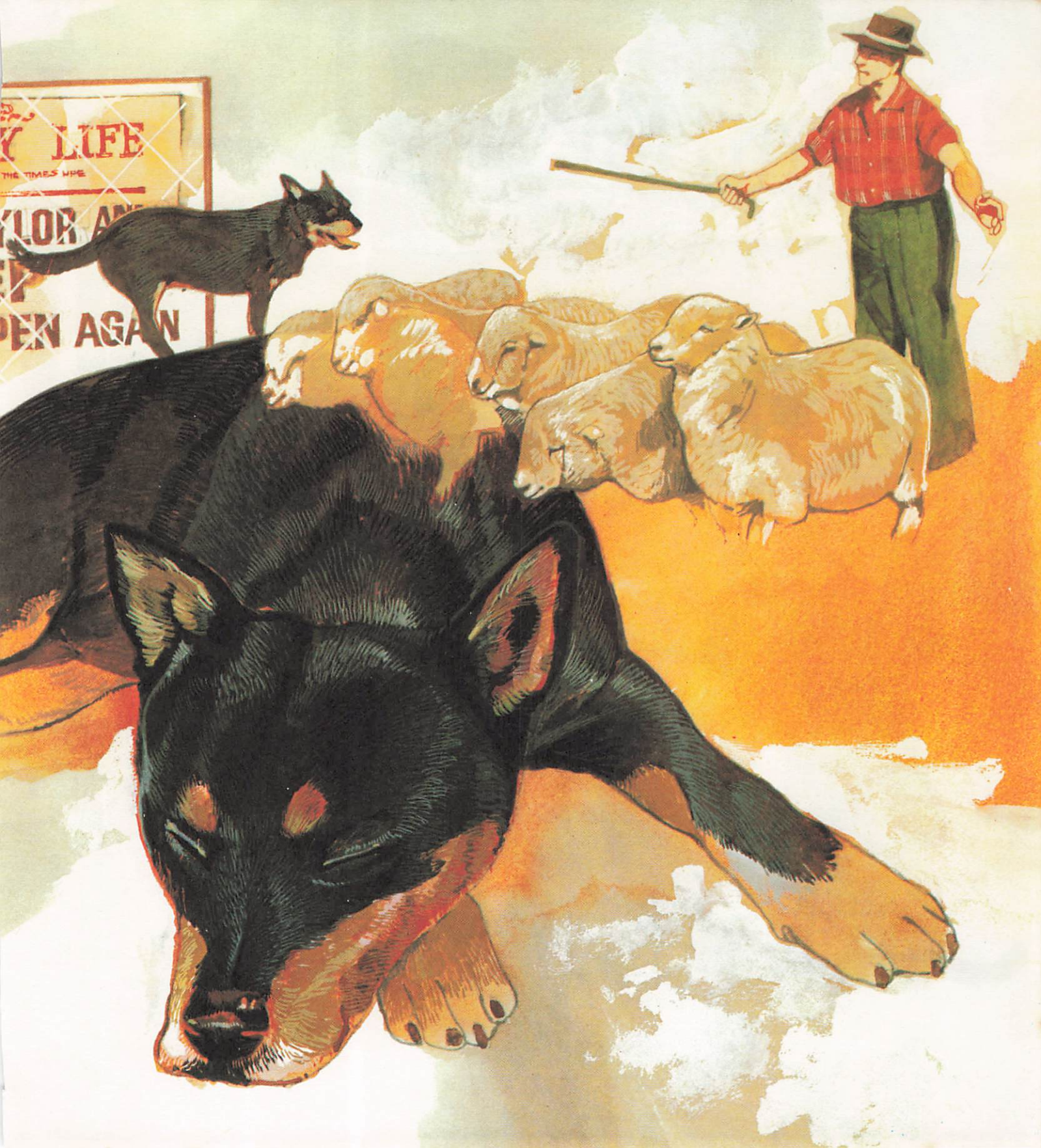
Shep lay snoozing in the hot sun outside the newsagent's door. Dreamily, he thought of his life as a working sheep-dog over the years in some of the biggest sheep stations in the country. And he had helped drive cattle as well – sharp-horned steers that were just as likely to flick a gash in you or stun you with a hard kick from a hoof. A working dog had to be agile to be any good.

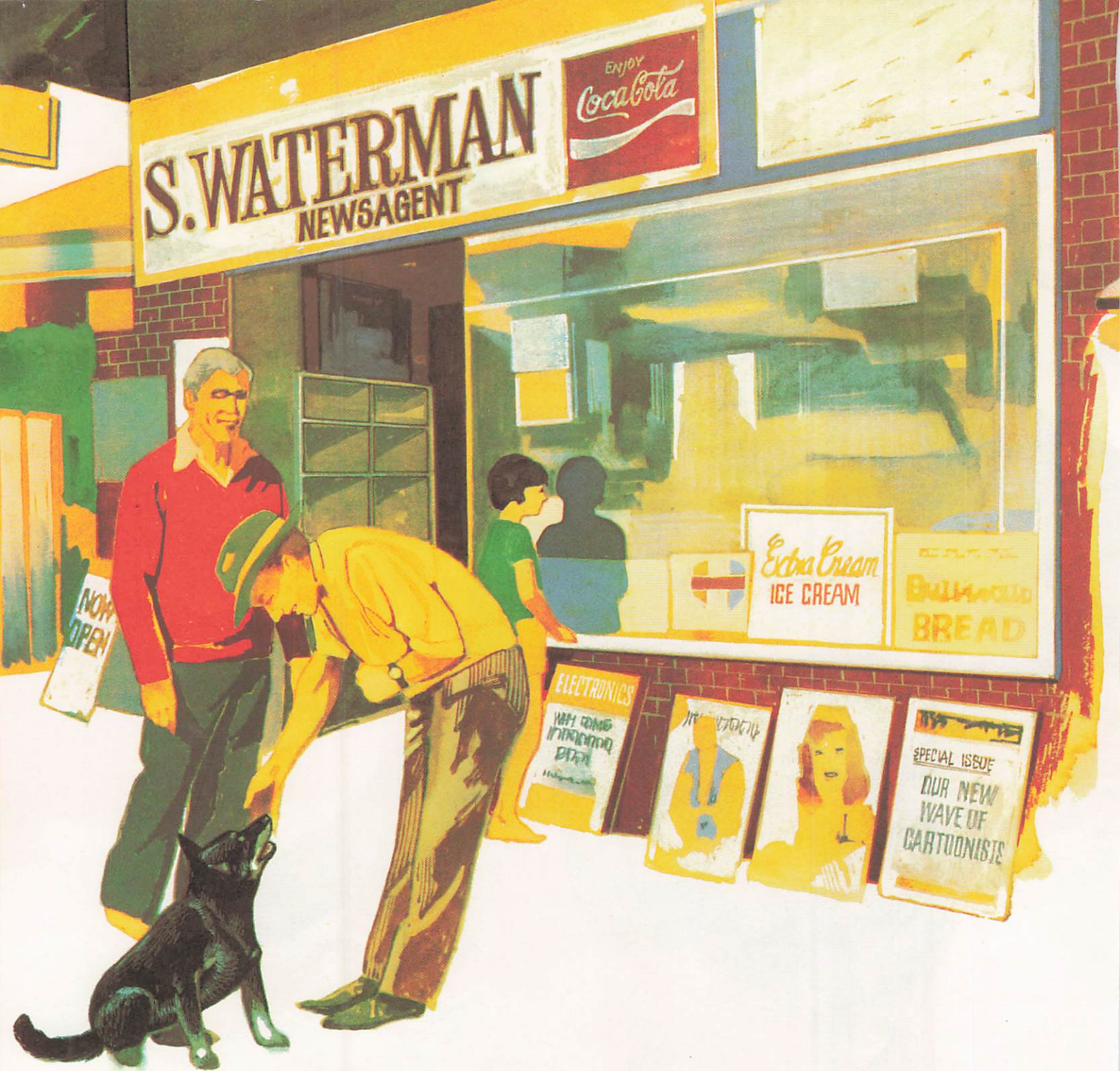
Shep supposed that, in his day, he had been pretty good. He had often heard his master say that a good dog was worth as much as a good man, and the dog cost even less to keep. And Shep was a good worker.

In the sheep country it is important that the dog can work at the opposite end of the paddock to his master, and that he understands different commands by the length of the man's whistle or by changes in the tone of his voice.

Shep and his master had been a prizewinning team. Together, they had competed in many sheep-dog trials and, so perfect was their understanding, they had won lots of championships and brought home many trophies.









But the thrill of the trials or the hard work of the ordinary day was over now for Shep. He was rarely told to jump up on the truck when his master went off to the high country to muster sheep. Some people even called him 'Shep, the worn-out sheep-dog'. Well, they were probably right. Maybe he *was* too old now.

Wearily he rose up and stretched out his back legs. It was too hot in the sun. Time to find some shade. As he did so a man, a stranger in town, came out of the newsagency and nearly tripped over him.

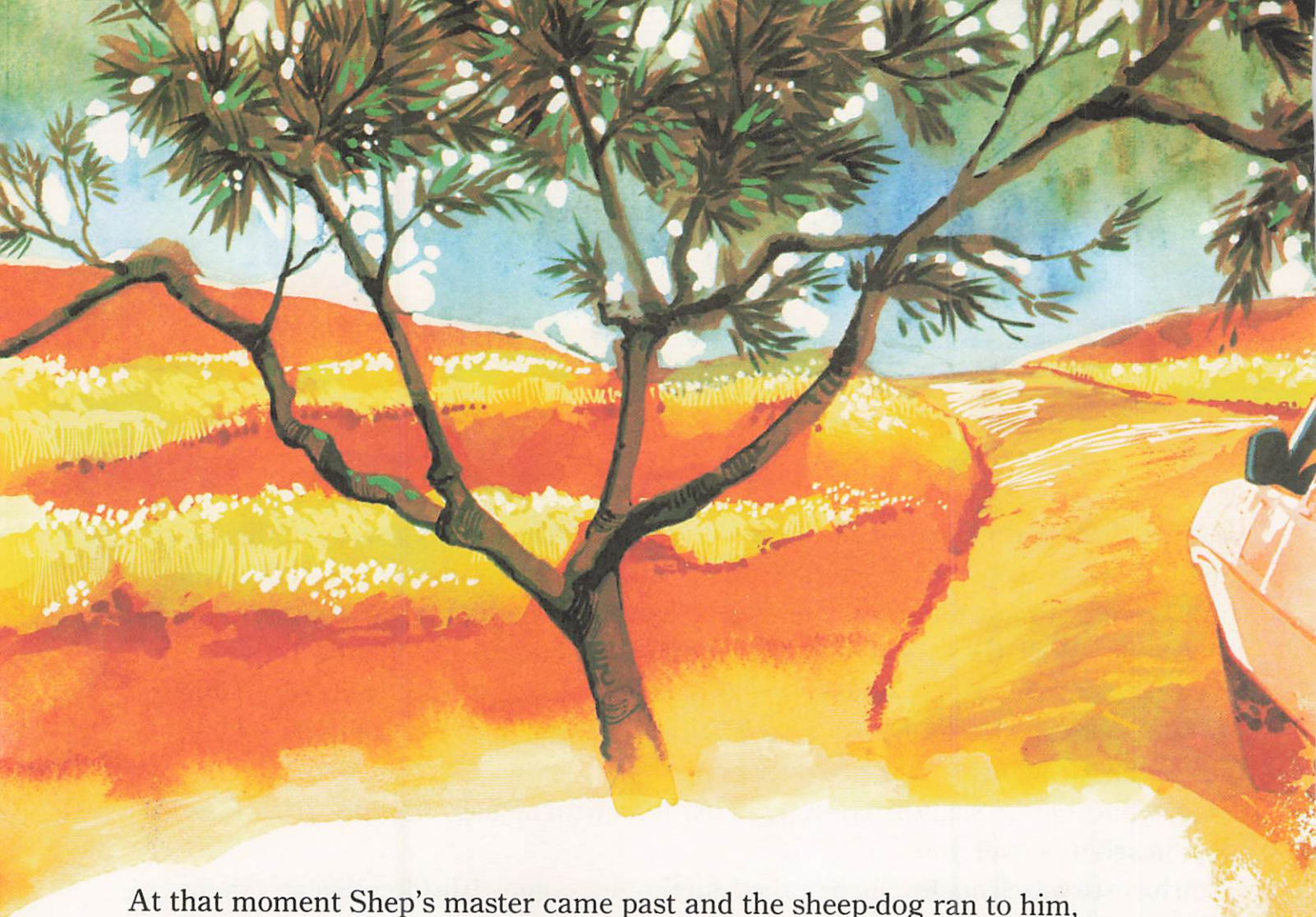
'Hey, what the . . .' said the stranger, a big man with an easy friendly grin. 'Easy boy, nearly fell over you.'

'You have to watch out for Shep,' called out the newsagent. 'He likes that spot there at the door. He gets the morning sun and warms his tired old bones.'

'Doesn't look very tired to me,' said the man. 'Whose dog is he?'

'Belongs to John Taylor who lives not far from here. I saw John in town a few minutes ago buying some supplies before he goes off to the high country again. He won't be taking Shep this time, though. Shep is nearly eight years old and he is at the age when sheep-dogs retire. Pity. He was something to see when it came to working sheep.'

The man looked down at Shep. 'If he is as good as you say, then I have just the job for him. I own a lion park and John might be interested in what I have to say about Shep's future.'



At that moment Shep's master came past and the sheep-dog ran to him, barking joyfully. The stranger also approached and held out his hand. 'My name is Jackson,' he said. 'I'm the owner of a lion park and I need a dog like Shep for a special job I have in mind.' He then spent a few minutes explaining what the job was all about.

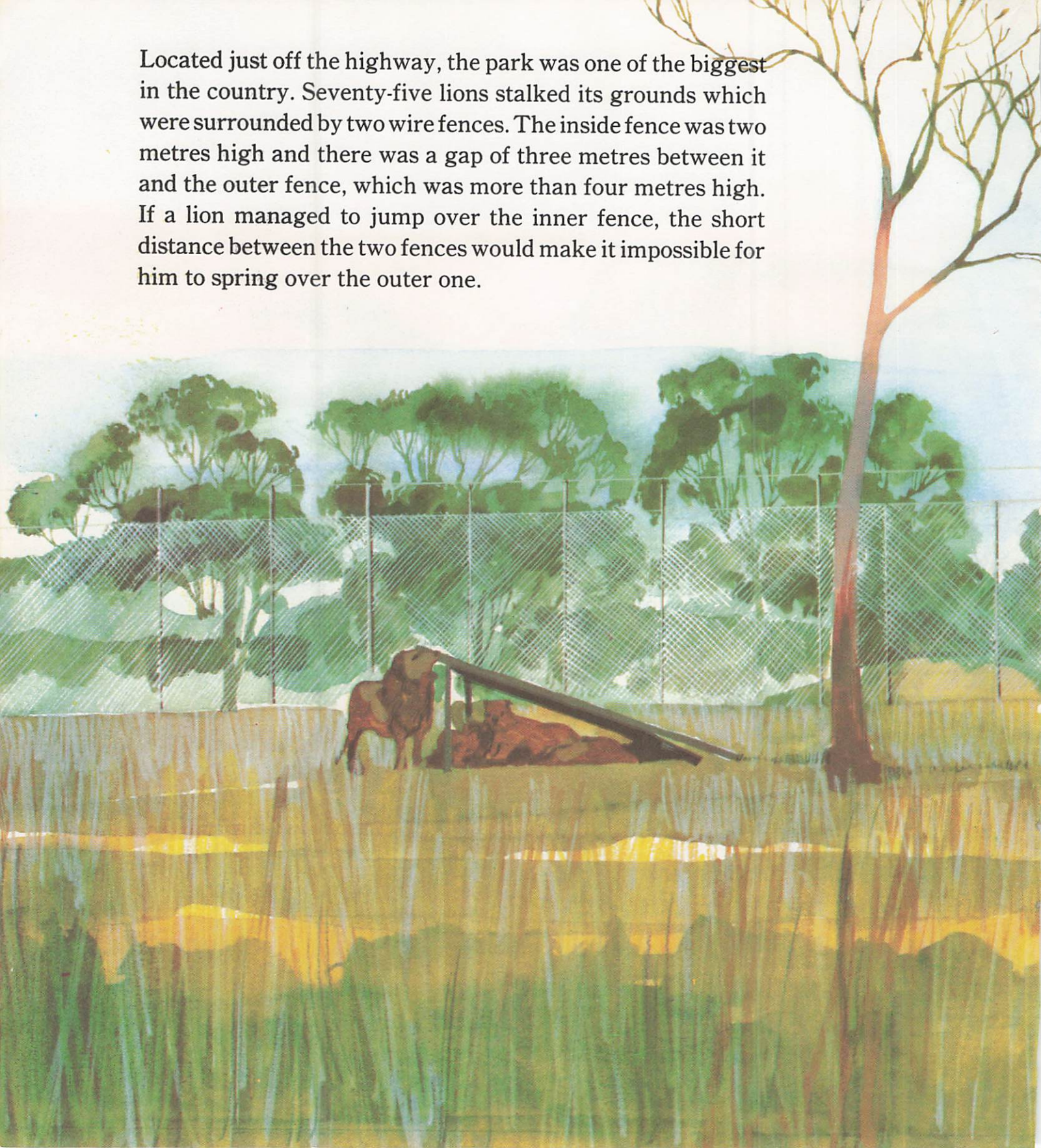
'Well,' John Taylor said slowly, 'if you really think Shep can help, I suppose it's okay if you borrow him for a few months. He cannot come out with me now and he needs something to keep him busy.'

'Don't worry about him,' said Mr Jackson. 'I'll look after him.'

And that was how Shep found himself sitting in the back of the stranger's ute as it sped north across the back country roads on its way to Mr Jackson's lion park.



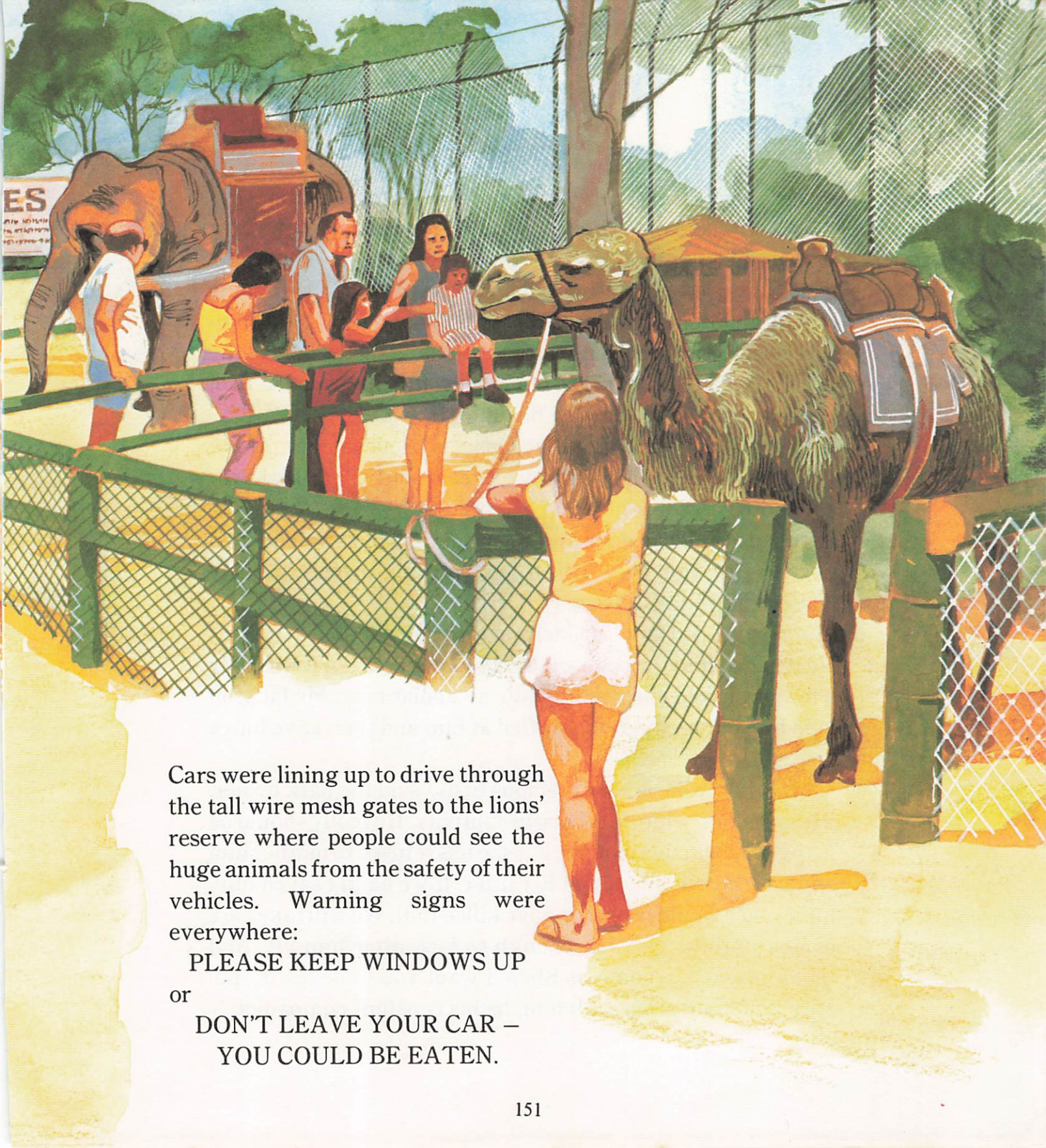
Located just off the highway, the park was one of the biggest in the country. Seventy-five lions stalked its grounds which were surrounded by two wire fences. The inside fence was two metres high and there was a gap of three metres between it and the outer fence, which was more than four metres high. If a lion managed to jump over the inner fence, the short distance between the two fences would make it impossible for him to spring over the outer one.







Mr Jackson took Shep straight to his house which was near the children's play area. It was a happy scene. Youngsters were sliding down chutes and clambering over the jungle fort made of smooth logs. Others were queueing up for rides on Ali the patient camel or on Jumbo the elephant who, as well as doing this job, did a marvellous balancing act during the two special performances each day.

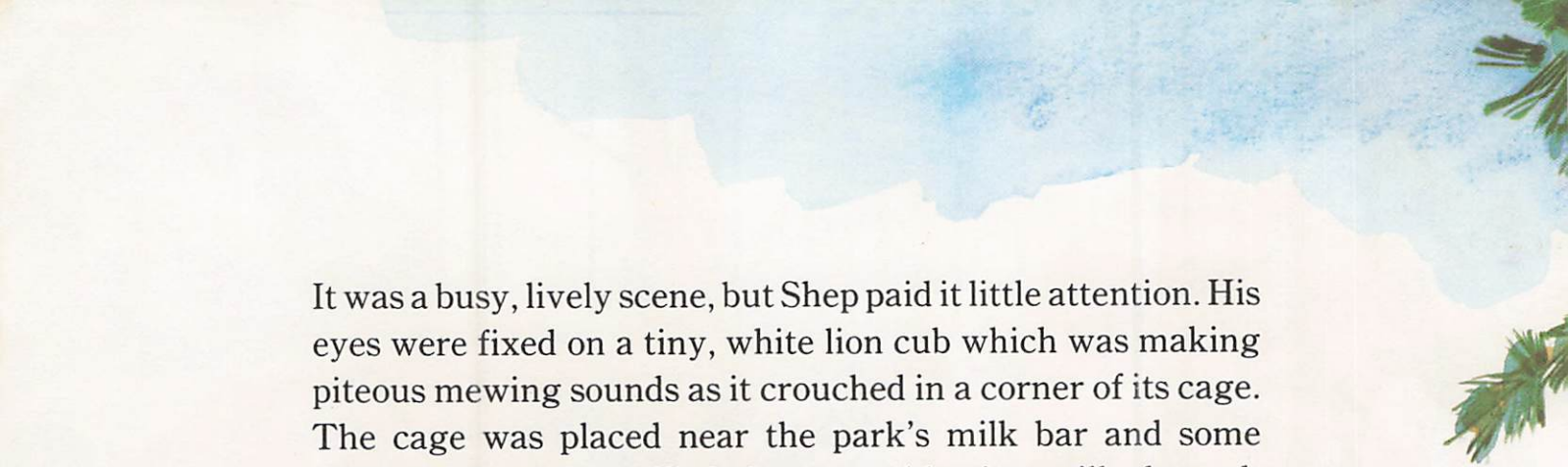


Cars were lining up to drive through the tall wire mesh gates to the lions' reserve where people could see the huge animals from the safety of their vehicles. Warning signs were everywhere:

PLEASE KEEP WINDOWS UP

or

DON'T LEAVE YOUR CAR –
YOU COULD BE EATEN.



It was a busy, lively scene, but Shep paid it little attention. His eyes were fixed on a tiny, white lion cub which was making piteous mewling sounds as it crouched in a corner of its cage. The cage was placed near the park's milk bar and some children clutching milkshakes were blowing milk through straws at the little cub and rattling sticks along the bars of the cage. To Shep it seemed as if a lamb was being worried and, true sheep-dog that he was, he didn't like it.

He gave an angry bark. Mr Jackson had been watching. 'Now you know why I need you, boy,' he said softly. 'I think Larry could do with some help.'

He opened the car door and Shep jumped out. He bounded over to the door and, with a few warning growls, quickly chased the youngsters away.

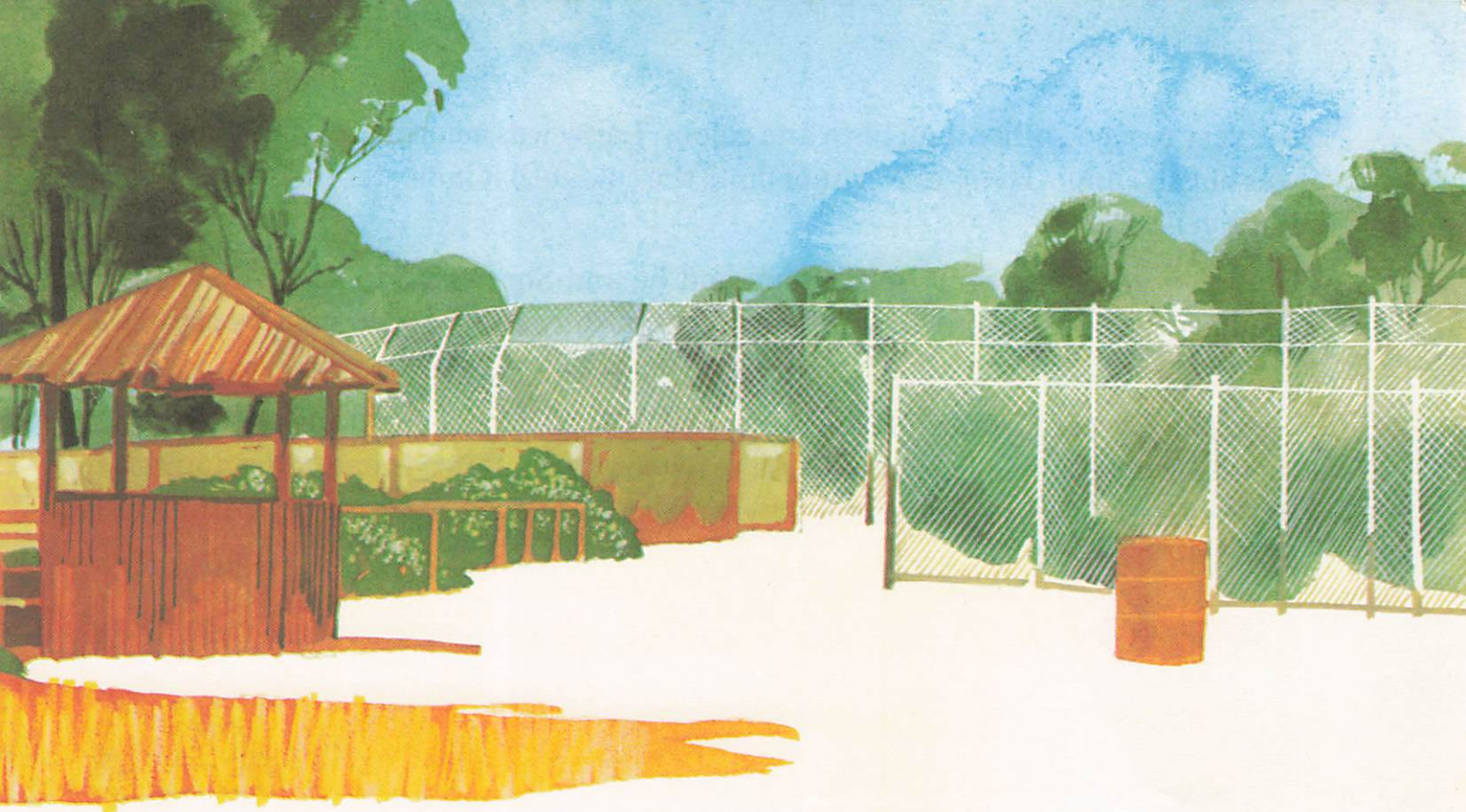
'Good lad. Good lad,' Mr Jackson said. 'You'll do.'

He reached into the cage and brought out the cub. It was only a few weeks old and was as white as a polar bear. Mr Jackson held him out to Shep who sniffed at him and then gave him a lick.

'This is Larry; he is very precious to us,' said the park owner. 'He is the first white lion born in captivity. He really should be in the park with his mother, but she has refused to mother him and has thrown him out of her litter. If we hadn't saved him, his mother would probably have killed him. We will take care of him until he gets big enough to look after himself. And that's where you come in, Shep. I want you to be his friend. Play with him, sleep with him, be his constant companion.'







Lion cubs are born blind and they do not start to see until they are about six days old. Larry was barely more than a couple of weeks old and he was just starting to look out at the world through yellow eyes. He looked so helpless and so defenceless that Shep decided this was the job for him. He would protect Larry. He gave the cub another lick and Mr Jackson said, 'Right, that's settled.'

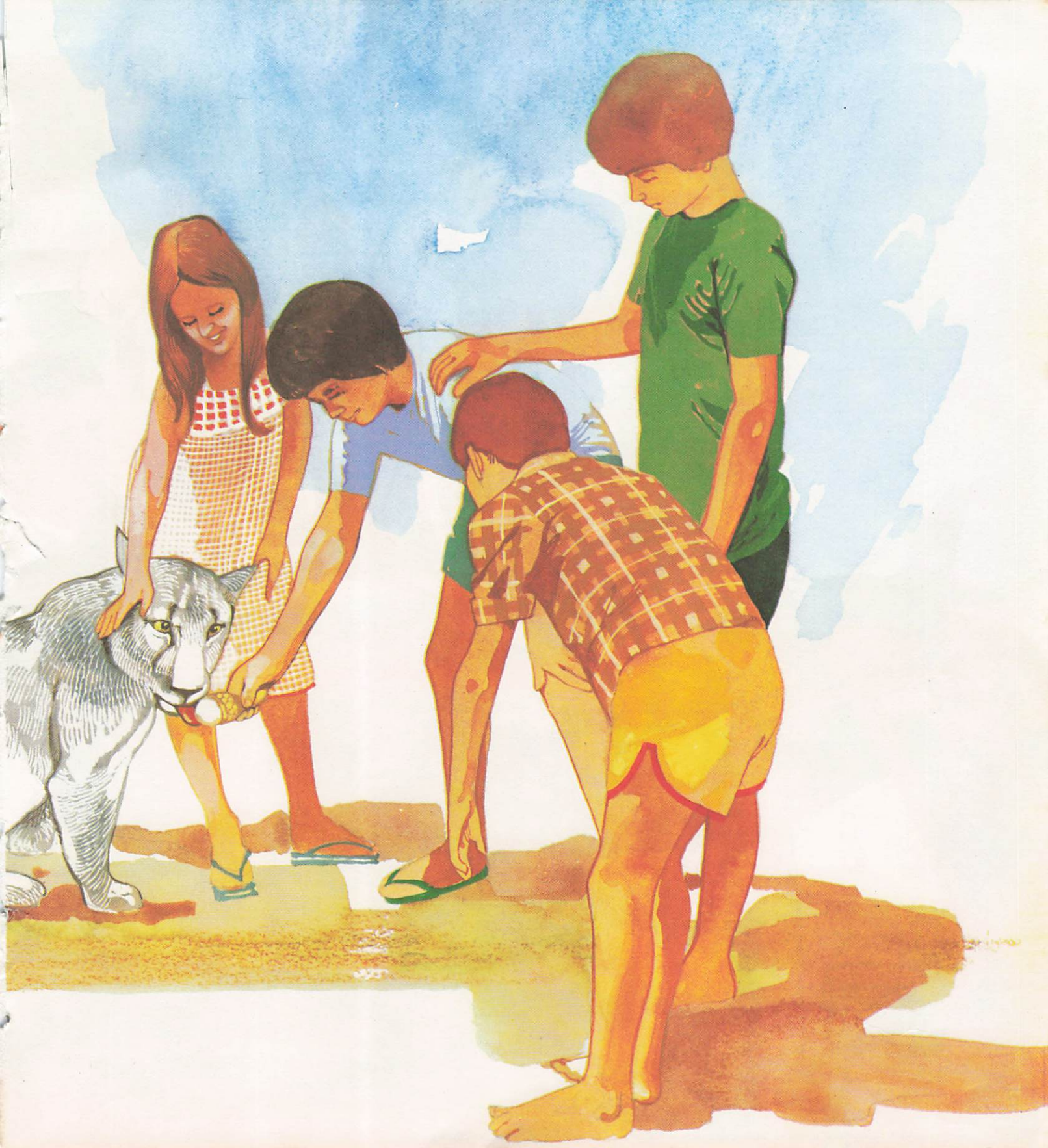
And so a new life started for Shep, the champion sheep-dog that everyone thought was too old to be of any use. As the days and weeks passed he and Larry became inseparable friends. They played together — romping around the children's playground, wrestling on the grass and slapping and cuffing each other.

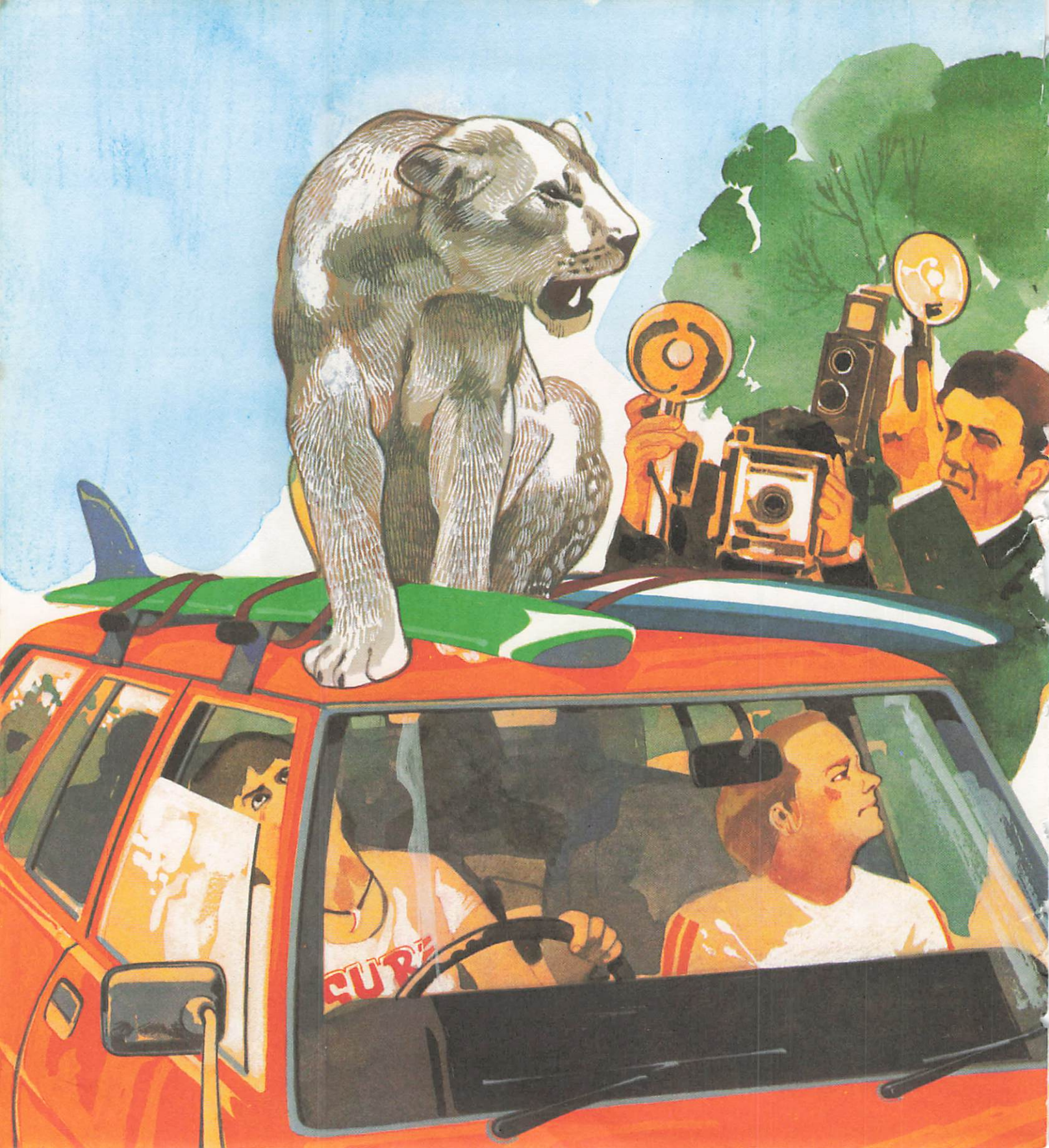
In every respect, other than his white colour, Larry was a normal, healthy lion. He was not an albino. His eyes were not pink, the colour that indicates the albino; they were yellow.

He was a gentle, friendly sort of cub and he and Shep liked to stroll about the grounds allowing visitors to pat them and gratefully enjoying the cool ice creams the people gave them to lick.

Newspaper reporters and television cameramen came to see them and photograph them. A white lion in itself would make a good story. But this one had a dog as a faithful friend and guardian and they walked around the park eating ice cream!









Unfortunately it couldn't last. All too soon Larry was nine months old. He weighed about forty kilograms and he was very strong and very agile. When he and Shep played together Shep was always careful to keep out of the way of his flashing paws. It might seem like a playful pat to Larry, but to Shep it was like a clout with a baseball bat.

And Larry was getting too big to be allowed to roam free around the park recreation grounds. You can never really tame a wild animal. If you raise it from a cub it will become friendly and very close to you. But the jungle instinct to kill never completely disappears.

One day while the pressmen were present a carload of surfies came into the park, their boards strapped on the roof. Larry and Shep were posing for photographs and one of the youths leaned out of the car window and yelled very loudly.

Larry was startled and became very angry. He bounded towards the car and sprang on to the roof, landing on the surfboards. His angry roars and snarls frightened the young men inside who quickly wound up the windows. Mr Jackson, who was with the pressmen at the time, ran over to the car and, with a few soothing words, coaxed Larry down from the car, leading Shep with him back to their cage.





It was all over very quickly and the reporters, who had witnessed everything, treated it as a joke. The next day a picture of Larry on the surfboard appeared in the paper with the caption:

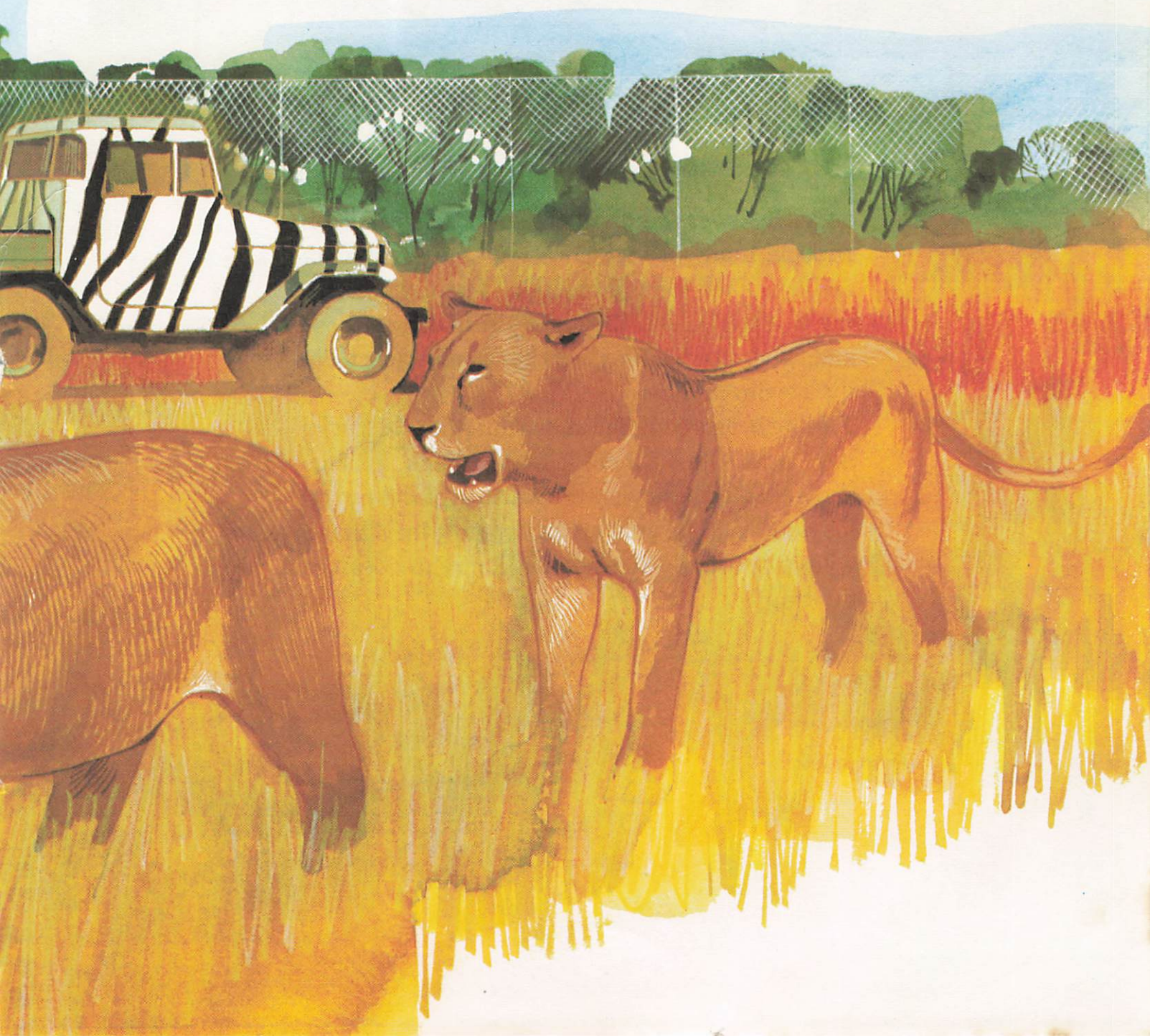
LARRY THE LION HANGS TWENTY (claws not toes).

But Mr Jackson and the keepers in the car park didn't think it was funny. It wasn't Larry's fault that he was a lion and a powerful one at that. However, his days of roaming among the public were over. He would have to stay in his cage until he was big enough to be let loose among the other lions in the reserve.

For the next three months Shep kept Larry company in the cage as they waited for the great day. Visitors to the park still came to see the unusual friends, but the days of happy wandering were over.



Larry was twelve months old when Mr Jackson decided he had to join the other lions. He fitted out a truck with Larry's cage and, accompanied by rangers in two patrol vehicles, drove into the lion territory with Shep and Larry in the cage.

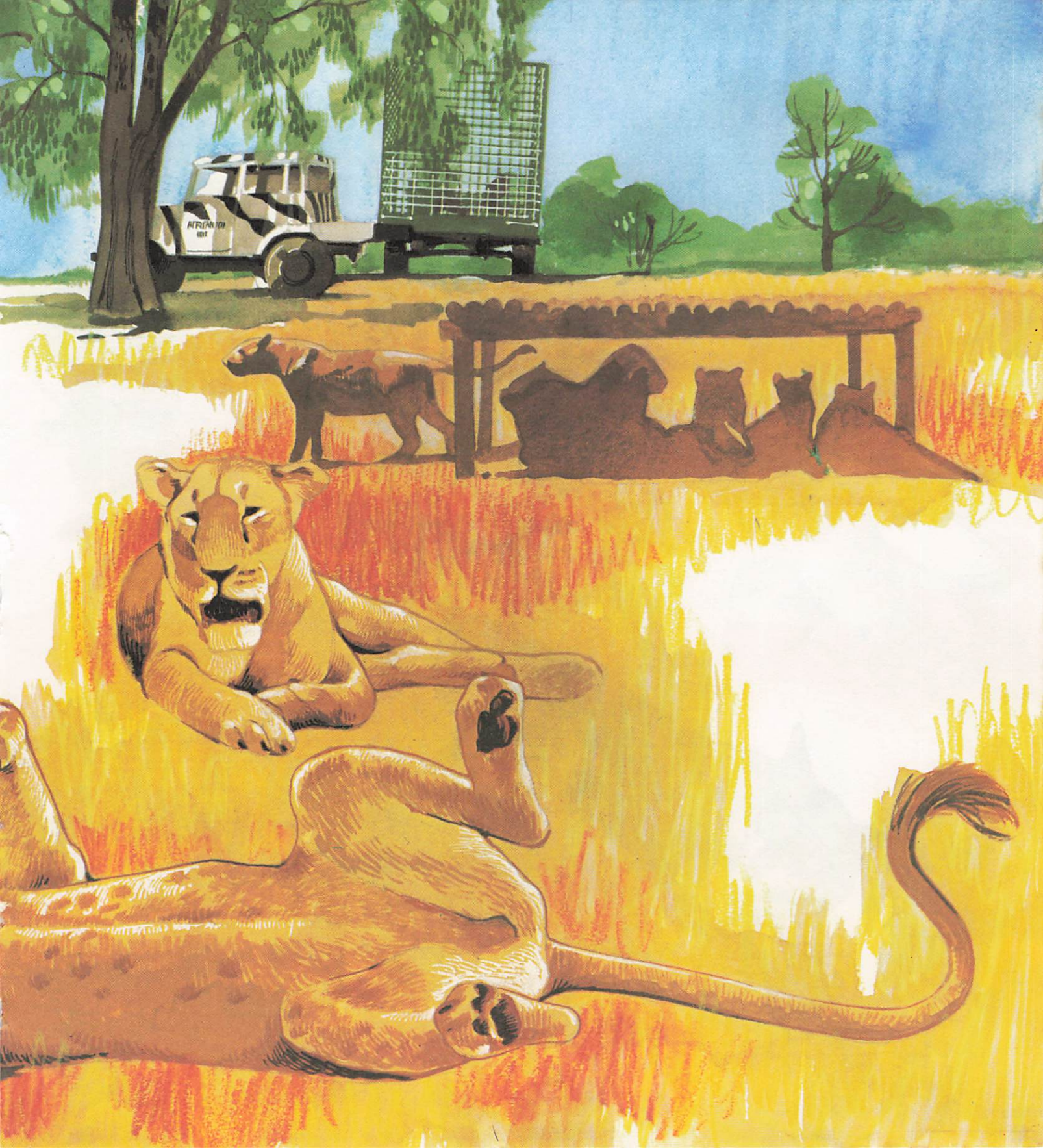




This was the first time Shep had been in the lion area. He saw it was divided into three areas, each with its lionhouse which acted as a windbreak and a shelter for the animals. There were also three waterholes. The lions drank from these and, when the weather was hot, sometimes went for a swim in them.

The big beasts coughed and grunted as the trucks went past. One of them lay on its back, his legs spreadeagled, enjoying the warmth of the sun on his tummy. Male lions are really quite lazy. In the wild it is usually the female lion who does the hunting.







Soon Mr Jackson stopped the convoy. Using a lever inside the cabin of his truck, he opened Larry's cage and the young lion jumped out. As he did so a huge, black-maned lion named Ahmed gave a ferocious roar and rushed toward Larry. He was clearly very angry by what he considered an intruder.

Shep saw that Larry would have no chance in a fight with this full-grown male. Without giving a thought to his own safety he leapt from inside the cage, darted across Ahmed's nose and nipped him in the hind leg. For him it was just like the old days when he was herding cattle and sheep!

Ahmed was so astonished that he forgot all about Larry and turned on Shep. However, in the few seconds it took for Shep's brave act, the rangers in the patrol vans had driven their vehicles at the furious Ahmed and chased him off, still snarling and spitting defiance.





Seeing that Larry was now safe, Shep leapt back into the safety of the cage on the truck. Larry jumped in after him. Mr Jackson pulled on the lever to close the door and the vehicle sped off, leaving Ahmed the proud victor. Nothing was too good for Shep when they got back. He was the hero who had faced a charging lion and saved his friend's life. Everyone wanted to pat him and shake his paw. Mr Jackson was especially happy because Larry (whom everyone was now calling 'Lucky') was worth a lot of money.

A white lion was very rare and even if he was not welcome in the lion park, he could still have a comfortable and enjoyable life in a zoo or a circus. And Shep, too, was very happy. Everyone had said he was worn-out and no use to anyone. But he had proved them wrong.



